

PARSIS IN INDIA AND THE DIASPORA

**Edited by John R. Hinnells and
Alan Williams**



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The Parsis are India's smallest minority community, yet they have exercised a huge influence on the country. As pioneers in education in 19th century India, and as leading figures in banking and commerce, medicine, law and journalism, they were at the forefront of India's industrial revolution. They were also prominent social reformers and were very influential in politics: Parsis were at the heart of the creation of the Indian National Congress in the 19th century and contributed some of the great leaders through into the 20th century. Parsis now have a global network, with significant diaspora communities across the world, including Pakistan, Hong Kong, Britain and in North America. This book, written by notable experts in the field, explores various key aspects of the Parsis. It spans the time from their arrival in India to the 21st century. All contributions are based on original research and most of them use hitherto unexplored primary sources. The first part of the book analyses the topic of Parsi migration from very different points of view; the second part presents leading Parsi personalities of the 19th and 20th centuries; and the final part is a set of studies of the Parsi traditional community in Bombay and an examination of three different diasporas. The concluding chapter, by John R. Hinnells, shows the range of contributions of Parsis to modern India and also in the diasporas, where the Zoroastrian religion is practiced in more countries around the globe than at any time in its history of more than 3,000 years.

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PREFACE

This book has grown out of a Research Workshop sponsored by the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Centre for Middle Eastern Studies and Study of Religions Department), and Liverpool Hope University, in July 2006. It brought together active researchers in the field of Parsi studies from six different countries. Each contributor circulated a copy of their paper in advance of the workshop and at least one hour's discussion took place of each chapter in turn. This facilitated interaction between contributors and sparked lively productive discussions of the contents of the whole book. The book provides an interdisciplinary series of snapshots through Parsi history; it spans five centuries of history, from a study of the iconic 'foundation text' the *Qesse-ye Sanjān*, and a report on the first excavations carried out at the port of Sanjan; it follows through with ten more studies down to the twenty-first century in India and the diaspora. John R. Hinnells organized the workshop and Alan Williams offered to co-edit the book. We both thank Sarah Stewart who undertook the in-house arrangements at SOAS. Liverpool Hope University generously funded the workshop. Both editors also wish to express their sincere thanks to Miss Nora K. Firby for her characteristically thorough work with the index.

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INTRODUCTION

John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams

The Parsis of India are a community which can often only be described in terms of superlatives. They belong to one of the world's oldest religious traditions, and they are now India's smallest community, yet they are among those who have exercised the greatest influence on the Subcontinent, having been foremost in so many areas all out of proportion to their demographic size. Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsis, takes its name from the ancient Iranian prophet Zoroaster, who is variously dated to between 1400 and 1200 BCE; it was the state religion of three Iranian empires – Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian – from the sixth century BCE to the seventh century CE.¹ In the face of Islamic persecution after the Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century, and perhaps being aware of trading opportunities on the coast of north-west India, Zoroastrians migrated there, probably as early as the eighth century (see Williams and Nanji, chapters 2 and 3 in this volume). They lived by an agrarian, artisan and small-scale mercantile existence, in relative peace and security, in the Indian Subcontinent until the arrival of the European trading powers in the seventeenth century. First came the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally the British: with this new wave, the Parsis moved from their traditional roles to participate increasingly in international trade and shipping.² When the English took possession of Bombay (1662), the Parsis migrated in increasing numbers to this new base free of Moghul rule and Maratha raids (although for several decades Bombay remained exposed to the danger of invasion). The English sought to attract migrants and to encourage minorities, and accordingly they offered freedom of religion and equal justice before the law: various minorities, such as the Jains and Parsis, chose to live under this new regime. Bombay was, therefore, from its early days, a cosmopolitan island³ on which Parsis flourished, first as middlemen in trade, then as independent traders. They also changed from a rural environment (see Stewart in this volume) to what became an urban setting.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century English trade in Bombay was the monopoly of the East India Company (despite some private trade and 'interlopers'). First missionaries, then private traders, were allowed into

Bombay in the early nineteenth century. The former brought education (as a means to evangelize) and the latter vastly increased trading profits. Parsis benefited from both, and subsequently they became perhaps the most westernized community in all of South Asia. In terms of trade and commerce they were unparalleled in their success and, consistent with their traditional values, they were the most generous benefactors to public charity in the history of pre-Partition India (see Palsetia in this volume).⁴ They built and ran the Bombay dockyard, and they were India's leading ship owners;⁵ they were pioneers in education,⁶ social reform and medicine in the nineteenth century;⁷ from that base they led the Indian industrial revolution. They were leaders in banking and commerce, law, (see Wadia and Sharafi respectively in this volume), medicine, journalism, and were very influential in politics.⁸ They were, therefore, pioneers in colonial India. They were at the heart of the creation of the Indian National Congress in the nineteenth century and they contributed some of India's great leaders through into the twentieth century. The first three Asian Members of the British Parliament at Westminster were Parsis (see McLeod in this volume),⁹ as were some of Gandhi's closest allies and strongest critics. At the time of Indian Independence (1947) Parsis committed themselves to post-colonial India (and in Sind to the new nation, Pakistan), being deeply involved in the growth of both countries (see Hinnells chapter 13 in this volume).

Given the remarkable track record of the Parsis, generally neither Indian nor western scholars have treated them with sufficient seriousness. Part of the reason for this is that, in spite of their deep involvement and investment in the Subcontinent, they are all too often perceived, and perceive themselves, to be different from and somewhat outside the greater Indian community. Though they have been in India for over 1,200 years Parsi Zoroastrians still regard themselves as long-term émigrés from Iran,¹⁰ which remains their spiritual home.¹¹ Indologists and Iranologists alike have tended to regard Parsis as marginal to their respective fields, as a community which does not fit neatly into either the mainstream Iranian or Indian world. Relatively few western scholars in Zoroastrian studies have written about the Parsis,¹² or taken the trouble to learn the vernacular language of the community (Gujarati), despite the fact that the great majority of contemporary ethnic Zoroastrians are Parsi, not Iranian. Parsis in India are, of course, themselves a diasporic community. The memory and ties with the old country, Iran, continued as they sought priestly guidance, especially on ritual matters for several centuries; they travelled there to study in Iran, then to campaign, for their oppressed Iranian co-religionists, and in more recent times they have gone on pilgrimage there to the holy sites. Images of Iran are evident in both Parsi homes and temples. From the early eighteenth century Parsis migrated to China, Britain, East Africa, Sri Lanka and Sind for trade, and communities grew in all these places. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries new Parsi settlements have grown up in the New

World, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and later in the Gulf States.¹³

The study of global diaspora communities is growing considerably, and *pace* the views of Safran and Cohen who deny that Parsis constitute diaspora communities, the Parsis in fact display many of the key features of other South Asian diasporas.¹⁴ Safran argued that the Parsis are concentrated in a single area, namely 'the Bombay region of India'. 'Moreover', he wrote, 'they have no myth of return to their original homeland', which he attributes to the influence of India's caste system and the tolerant attitude of Hinduism towards Parsis (because scholars of Safran's era argued that for a group to qualify as a diaspora, there had to be an element of hostility on the part of the host society towards the diaspora group). Cohen argues that the Parsis are not so much a travelling nation as a travelling religion. He, also, argues that Parsis lack a 'myth and idealization of a homeland and return movement' (see, however, Williams in this volume). Safran overlooks the global spread of Parsis noted above. Both Safran and Cohen presuppose a 'real' diaspora community should have an expectation of return, something many other writers in the broad field reject. Although Jews the world over express the wish 'next year in Jerusalem', only a small number ever seriously contemplate moving back to Israel. Cohen argues that as a religious group Parsis cannot constitute a diaspora, but Vertovec (2000) argues that Hinduism (and by implication Judaism and Sikhism) is an exception, in which case it is difficult to see why the ethnic-religious Parsi Zoroastrians are not also.¹⁵ In fact, they fit all the other criteria listed by Cohen (1997: 26), namely, dispersal from an original homeland, a collective memory and myth about that homeland and its idealization, a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time, and solidarity with co-ethnic members and enriching host societies. Another criterion mentioned by Cohen, namely a troubled relationship with host societies, is perhaps too rigid an imposition of the original Jewish victim diaspora model (unless one includes racial prejudice, for this Parsis have experienced in western societies).

Parsis in fact make a particularly good case study for diaspora studies. The community in India – but also in Britain and Hong Kong – have been there for generations so that one can consider issues relating to successive generations. The modern western diaspora groups come from a variety of 'national' origins, India, Pakistan, East Africa and, of course, Iranian Zoroastrian exiles. They exemplify several of the diaspora types outlined by Cohen, namely as victim populations (e.g. East African Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians), in terms of their position in the labour market (Parsis are particularly highly educated professionals, scientists etc. in all western countries), regarding trade (e.g. China and Britain) and culturally, with the characteristic Parsi emphasis on the role as preservers of Persian culture. The small demographic numbers in any Parsi community mean that the researcher can know a high ratio of the total population. Parsis in any country have been meticulous at

keeping records and, not least, they typically welcome outside academics. Viewing Parsis in this context of South Asian migration we may see important patterns emerge within the Parsi community, which have, for example, to do with issues of leadership, second and subsequent generations, transnational ties and the role of ‘gatekeepers’ protecting community boundaries.¹⁶ Parsi diaspora communities constitute both an ethnic and a religious diaspora; they are polyglot, having literatures and vernaculars in Persian, Gujarati and English, and other indigenous languages from countries where they have settled, not to mention the older Iranian languages of their scriptures.¹⁷

The essays

The essays collected in this book are by a range of historians of religion, social and legal historians, linguists, sociologists and archaeologists, i.e. specialists with very different approaches to the subject; they are, in most cases, not general surveys but very particular studies which, even in the limited space available, go into considerable detail in order to present their subjects in sharp focus and vivid colour. They are all part of separate long-term research projects and so thoroughly document their precise study within a wider field. To give one major example of this, a compendious collection of studies was recently published,¹⁸ written by an international team of 40 scholars (of whom five are represented in this present volume), on the whole gamut of Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrianism. The *raison d'être* of our collection of essays is to bring together a focused and concentrated view of the Parsis, not only for the benefit of scholars and students of Zoroastrianism, but also for those interested in the history of religions and diaspora studies in general across cultures, for South Asianists, and for colonial and post-colonial historians.

The plan behind the original workshop and this consequent publication was to focus on three key periods in Parsi history:

- 1 What might be described as ‘the settlement’ of the Parsis in India, with a textual and an archaeological study of the arrival of the Parsis at the port of Sanjan, together with a study of an oral tradition concerning the celebration of one of the earliest Atash Bahrams (or ‘Cathedral’ fire temples).
- 2 Nineteenth-century India when Parsis are widely thought to have been at the peak of their power and influence: this Part includes a historical study of a key role model, the merchant prince and benefactor Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (the first Indian to be knighted); a religious studies paper on changing perceptions and loci of religious and secular authority in the Indian community; an economic historian’s study of the nineteenth-century Bombay Parsi business world and a historian’s study of the gradually changing nature of identity in a leading Indian Parsi who went

on to become a Member of the Westminster Parliament, Sir Mancherji Bhownaggee in the late nineteenth century;

- 3 Parsis in twentieth-century India and in their diasporas: it includes a legal historian's study of unpublished material concerning a landmark judgment, followed into the twenty-first century in India and the diaspora, on who is and is not a Parsi. The next essay is on the history of the Parsis in Sri Lanka, a group rarely studied outside the boundaries of the community. A sociologist then studies the demographic features and religious beliefs and practices of British Parsis in the twenty-first century, focusing in particular on the attitudes to the purity laws, so often neglected in previous studies of the modern period. A historian of religions writes about the new forms or transformations of the ancient prophetic religion not only, but especially, in California. Finally a Parsi historian takes a bird's-eye view of Parsis in India and the diaspora in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This is the broad structure of the book. Such a relatively small collection of original research articles cannot cover the whole spectrum of Parsi history and religion: a book which does this is long awaited and urgently needed.¹⁹ It will help the reader to give a more nuanced account of the individual essays in this book.

Part 1 The settlement of the Parsis in India

The first essay, by Alan Williams, is on the structure and poetic unity of a text which for several centuries has lain at the heart of Parsi identity. The *Qesse-ye Sanjān* is a poem in Persian couplets, which was composed by a Zoroastrian priest, Bahman Kay Kobād, in the late sixteenth century. Today it is a renowned text in the Parsi community (though perhaps not so much read), as the only account of the exodus of Zoroastrians from Iran to escape Muslim persecution after the Islamic conquest of Iran. It has ever since become one of the principal mirrors of Parsi self-perception. Translated into Gujarati, Urdu and European languages, it serves, among other things, as a prototype for the subsequent Parsi diaspora. In the past 150 years it has tended to be regarded as a folk-chronicle from which scholars have tried to work out a history of the Parsi transition from their motherland to the first Parsi diaspora in India, in spite of the fact that it contains no dates except one – that of its own composition in 1599. In this chapter, which is based upon the author's new, literal and metrical, translation and on a new analysis of the Persian text, it is argued that such historicist interpretations have missed a deeper level of meaning. This study discovers the *Qesse-ye Sanjān* as a religious poem which affirms traditional Zoroastrian imperatives, along with a justification of the departure of the Zoroastrians who migrated from Iran and also a vindication of their settlement in India as 'Parsis'. It is also

a text by which its priestly author could assert his own understanding of the far-reaching changes in the balance of Parsi society, as he charts the long history of the shifting of authority from ancient kingly power and priestly authority to the pre-modern period in which he seems to foresee the flourishing of the mercantile and entrepreneurial classes.

Rukshana Nanji's essay is on a related topic, namely the foundations of the original Parsi installation and establishment in India, but it is written from what may be seen as an opposite perspective from the preceding essay. Nanji considers new archaeological evidence uncovered by the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation excavations at Sanjan in Gujarat, India. In detail she considers evidence for the landing at Sanjan of the band of migrant Zoroastrians who sailed from Iran, as mentioned in the *Qesse-ye Sanjān*. Not only can the excavations establish the Zoroastrian presence at Sanjan, they also open a new chapter in Indian Archaeology – the study of early medieval sites and early medieval ceramics. Nanji argues that Sanjan was not only a small settlement of Persian migrants but, as the trade ceramics from Persia and China prove, it was a thriving cosmopolitan port with a large population of Hindus, Arabs, Persians (Parsis) and other communities, playing an important role in the east–west trade of the Indian Ocean. Literary records, epigraphic sources, historical accounts and legends have been tested against this scientifically verifiable data. Corroborated with the ceramic chronology at the site and the absolute dates, it is now possible to date the migration securely to the early to mid-eighth century. The site predates the migration and confirms that the migrants chose to come to a land already familiar to them through earlier trade contacts. Nanji argues that it is certain that the migration acted as an impetus to the trade of this port, just as it is certain that the migrants were mainly merchants who were fleeing not only religious but also economic persecution. The excavation of the '*dokhma*', with its large collection of human remains, establishes the presence of a large Zoroastrian population until the abandonment of the site, which may have been due to geological, political or other reasons. The chapter presents an archaeological perspective to the Sanjan story based on historical data and on diagnostic tests on ceramics found during the excavations.

Sarah Stewart's essay draws on two genres of Zoroastrian texts, prayers and song, in order to demonstrate the way in which Parsis in India understand the textual tradition of this religion today. Her examination of these texts, in conjunction with a series of interviews conducted with Parsis of Bombay and Gujarat over the past 10 years, shows that meaning is not necessarily dependent upon a literal understanding of words, so much as their perceived power, and moreover the efficacy of reciting prayers and performing devotional acts. Meaning is also conveyed in structure and imagery, which are factors largely unexplored by scholars of Zoroastrianism. The different versions of the *Atash nu Git*, the 'Song of the Fire,' show that certain structures remain in place in a composition that has been adapted for use

in different contexts. The powerful imagery of some of the prayers serves to underpin doctrinal teachings of which the laity is made aware through religious observance rather than as a result of religious education. The oral composition and transmission of the prayers must have been an important factor in determining the way in which they were understood. The Song also shows evidence of having once been an oral compilation and, when viewed as a performance, serves as a vehicle through which to understand the ritual nature of the prayers.

Part 2 Parsis in nineteenth-century India

The first essay, by Jesse S. Palsetia, examines the impact of the Parsi merchant prince and philanthropist Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy on the public culture of Bombay in the first half of the nineteenth century. It notes Jejeebhoy's engagement of imperial ideologies, and in particular how he utilized charity and imperial rites, to fashion a place for himself and the Indian urban elite under colonialism, and shape a colonial public culture receptive to Indian requirements. Jejeebhoy is an example of Parsi ability and agency to collaborate successfully with, and to exploit, colonialism to Indian advantage.

John Hinnells's essay looks at changing perceptions of secular and religious authority among Parsis in the Bombay Presidency in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It looks at the mechanisms by which the authority of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat was operated and how that declined in the 1830s. It also looks at the question of priestly authority, its relocation from Navsari to Bombay and how it gave way to the authority of secular courts even on religious issues. Many studies of the Parsis have neglected the importance of Anjuman, or community, meetings which had to be called for disciplinary matters (e.g. when someone took a second wife), to confirm the appointment of a *dastur* or even to authorize the consecration of a sacred bull to be kept in the temple. But disputes arose over who had the authority to call an Anjuman meeting and their importance has declined. These developments explain why in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Parsis have no clear line of authority either in secular or religious matters as they had before the nineteenth century.

Rusheed Wadia's essay argues that much writing on the history of the Parsis in the nineteenth century has been pursued from an orientation which emphasizes a centrally important role of English institutions in the intellectual development of the Parsis. Wadia presents a critique of this view. He also explores the relation between community formation and the business enterprise of the Parsis in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Bombay. In trying to develop their enterprise in a colonized economic environment, Parsi merchants manifested a sense of the collective: in the same period, the setting up of the cultural and the institutional infrastructure of the community also promoted the coming together of Parsi merchants. The

convergence of these two processes had important implications for Parsi enterprise at this time. The chapter offers a critical evaluation of the concept of 'community' for studying Parsi enterprise, and argues for a need to study the business history of the Parsis along with the business histories of other communities in western India.

Next John McLeod's essay examines projects undertaken by Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree to commemorate his sister Awabai: a medal for the girl graduating with the highest marks from the Alexandra Girls' English Institution in Bombay; a stained glass window in a London church; a nurses' home in Bombay; a corridor in the Imperial Institute in London; and an unbuilt memorial hall in Bombay intended to further female education. Bhownagree's memorial projects represent a coming together of the Victorian British practice of preserving the memory of the deceased, the Parsi custom of commemorating the dead with charitable gifts, the Parsi culture of benevolence, and nineteenth-century Parsi notions of progress (which was often associated with such causes as female education, western medicine and the British Empire). The memorial projects helped pave the way for Bhownagree's election to Parliament in 1895. They cemented his ties with important people in India and Britain. They showed that he could practise the sort of open-handed generosity then expected of MPs. Finally, first the death of his sister, and then the failure of his memorial hall project, played roles in Bhownagree's decision to make London his home rather than Bombay. This essay is a nuanced cameo study of the cultural impact of a dialogue between personal and public memorialization, and of its implications.

Part 3 Parsis in twentieth-century India and in their diasporas

Mitra Sharafi's essay examines previously unread diaries of a High Court judge, on the legal case of *Petit v Jijibhai* (1908). This case remains perhaps the single most discussed lawsuit in the Parsi world during the century since it was decided. The case turned upon the question of outsider or *juddin* admission into the Parsi Zoroastrian community. In the suit, also known as the Parsi Panchayat case, a French woman named Suzanne Brière married into the Tata family. She was married in a Zoroastrian wedding ceremony, and claimed to have undergone her initiation ceremony or *navjote* beforehand. The first Parsi judge of the Bombay High Court, Dinshaw Davar, delivered the leading judgment and decided against her. Davar ruled that Mrs Tata was not entitled to benefit from Parsi trusts, and hence could be denied access to Parsi fire temples and '*dokhmas*', as well as to vast sums of charitable aid for Parsis. The blind British judge Frank Beaman wrote a concurring opinion supporting Davar's overall conclusions. The standard account of this case is that it was about principles, not personalities. New evidence from the Bombay High Court, which Sharafi examines in this essay, suggests otherwise. The judgment notebook of Beaman in particular

suggests that the final ruling must be read in light of the ethnic, personal and professional judicial dynamics at play between the two judges. Davar's view, which itself hardened mid-way through proceedings, seems to have dominated through force of character, superior legal credentials and membership in the Parsi community at a time when South Asians were asserting their presence in the legal profession in bold new ways.

In a highly condensed account, Jamsheed K. Choksy reflects on three major phases of settlement by Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians which occurred on the island of Ceylon or Sri Lanka. The first main phase lasted from Antiquity into the Middle Ages, in which we hear of maritime traders who took spices to the Achaemenian and Sasanian empires, mercenaries who brought Sinhalese kings to power, and priests who designed palaces, shrines and Persian gardens. The second main phase lasted from 1600 into the late 1700s, when Iranian and Parsi sailors cast anchor in the island's safe harbors, planters worked on cash-crop estates of the hinterland, and petty traders pioneered credit for the locals. The third main phase from the late 1700s to the present day brought Parsi merchants and professionals from British India, whose descendants rose to prominence in law, medicine and civil service. Choksy explains how the migration away from the Zoroastrian community in modern Sri Lanka has resulted from the rise of Sinhalese nationalism and the economic opportunities of the West. Indian Ocean trade, Near Eastern and Asian politics and European colonialism were the main mechanisms that propelled the relocation of Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians to Sri Lanka. Those movements of Zoroastrians ensured transmission of ideas, industries and mores. At each phase, Zoroastrians who settled on the island established diaspora communities that maintained ties with co-religionists in Iran, India and East Asia.

Gillian Towler Mehta's chapter is a longitudinal survey of Zoroastrians in Britain following smaller surveys undertaken in collaboration with John R. Hinnells in 1975 and 1986. The questionnaire, trialled extensively among Zoroastrians in advance, undertook two main tasks: first, to assess questions of change and continuity over the two decades since the last survey; second, to develop into areas that previous surveys had not dealt with. Most important among the second was the range of attitudes to the purity laws, specifically whether menstruating women should pray, have contact with the priest or attend religious functions. This chapter is focused on the responses of different sections of the community to those purity laws – male/female, young/old, highly/less well-educated etc. This new and original research yielded some very interesting conclusions.

Taking a term originally coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, Michael Stausberg ventures beyond the frames of ethnic Zoroastrian communities to discuss a selection of what he calls 'memetic migrations' and 'para-Zoroastrianisms'. The seven religious movements which Stausberg examines are, unlike the diasporas of ethnic Zoroastrians such as the Parsis,

not normally seen as legitimate offshoots of Zoroastrianism by Zoroastrians. They have, however, a legitimate place in this set of studies in the history of religions, as they may be described as varieties of ‘para-diaspora’ or ‘para-tradition’, i.e. where cultural information has been replicated *outside* the line of ethnic transmission. The religious meme is a particularly interesting phenomenon for scholars of religion when it is a replication from an ethnically defined tradition, such as is the religion of the Parsis which has operated a regime of strict control over its own boundaries with regard to who may and who may not be a member. Certain of Stausberg’s examples overlap with the ethnic community of Zoroastrians, while others operate entirely without any involvement in ethnic Zoroastrianism: all, however, present opportunities for scholarly reflection on notions such as authenticity, originality and origin. The future developments of the para-Zoroastrianisms sketched in this essay remain to be seen. They may well turn out to be relatively short-lived experiments only to be replaced by others. The main objective of Stausberg’s essay is to exemplify the flow of memes or representations, the study of which may open new horizons for the history of religions. Religious memetic transmissions and appropriations give a whole new meaning to the concept of diaspora.

The final essay, by John R. Hinnells, gives a survey account of the Parsis in the twentieth and early twenty-first century. The modern history of the Parsis has not been studied as much as that of the nineteenth century. Indologists generally recognize the importance of the earlier period of Parsi history, but they tend to neglect the role Parsis have played in modern India. Similarly many older Parsis in India today suggest that the modern community has not had the great figures and achievers it had in the nineteenth century. This chapter seeks to correct that impression by looking briefly at some of the great achievers over the last 100 years. It also considers what has been a century of dynamic change in the religion, and reflects on the phenomenon of the global diaspora of modern Zoroastrianism. In the twenty-first century Zoroastrianism is practised in more countries than at any other time in its long history: this chapter gives a bird’s eye view of that spread over many continents in modern times.

Notes

- 1 The standard one-volume history of Zoroastrianism is M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 2nd ed. London/New York, Routledge, 2000. For the early Imperial period see Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vols. I–III, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1975, 1982, 1991 (Vol. III with Franz Grenet).
- 2 M. Kamekar and S. Dhunjisha, *From the Iranian Plateau to the Shores of Gujarat: The Story of Parsi Settlements and Absorption in India*, Mumbai: K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 2002.
- 3 On the early history of Bombay see M. D. David, *History of Bombay in the Making . . . 1661–1726*, Bombay: Bombay University, 1973.

- 4 J. R. Hinnells, 'The Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence', in *Papers in Honour of Mary Boyce*, eds H. W. Bailey, A. D. H. Bivar, J. Duchesne-Guillemin and J. R. Hinnells, Acta Iranica, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, 261–326.
- 5 R. H. Wadia, *The Bombay Dockyard and the Wadia Master Builders*, Bombay, 1955 (author's publication).
- 6 See Z. E. Shroff, *The Contribution of Parsis to Education in Bombay City (1820–1920)*, Mumbai, Himalaya Publishing House, 2001.
- 7 M. Ramana, *Western Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Bombay 1845–1895*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2002.
- 8 E. Kulke, *The Parsees in India: A Minority as Agents of Social Change*, Munich, 1974.
- 9 J. R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996.
- 10 See R. B. Paymaster, *Early History of the Parsees in India*, Bombay, 1954, 66–84, 126–31.
- 11 Iran is the modern name for the country and, indicating 'the land of the Aryans', may be seen as the correct name for the land. It is also referred to as Persia because that province in the south-west of the country was, for much of its imperial and later Islamic history, the centre of government for the rulers. Many Parsis, so-called as people from Pars or Persia, often use the name 'Persia' to invoke the past glories of their heritage.
- 12 Philip Kreyenbroek, Jenny Rose, James Russell, Michael Stausberg, Sarah Stewart and both present editors are among recent exceptions.
- 13 See M. Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras, Geschichte-Gegenwart-Rituale*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2002, Vol. 2, 263–378.
- 14 W. Safran, 'Diasporas on Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, Spring 1991, 83–99 at 89; R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 1997, 188f.
- 15 S. Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns*, London, Routledge, 2000, 1f.
- 16 K. Knott 'Religion and Identity, and the Study of Ethnic Minority Religions in Britain', in V. Hayes (ed.), *Identity Issues and World Religions*, Sydney, 1986, Vertovec, *Hindu Diaspora*, 21–3. For a review of the literature see Hinnells, *Zoroastrian Diaspora*, 17–32.
- 17 See Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, Oxford, OUP, 2005 for a review of the literature and studies of Parsis in 15 countries.
- 18 Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree (eds), *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art Religion and Culture*, Mapin (Ahmedabad, India)/Granta (Middletown, USA).
- 19 The work by Kulke noted above was pioneering in the way he unearthed a huge range of primary materials, but he nowhere discusses religion, which for most Parsis is their defining feature. J. S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*, Leiden, Brill, 2001 is an excellent book, but focuses on the one city in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. M. Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras, Geschichte-Gegenwart-Rituale*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2002, Vol. 1, 373–446, considers the pre-British period and therefore looks outside Bombay into Gujarat. His Vol. 2, 13–151 discusses mainly Bombay. These are important works, but a study of Parsi history and religion in India as a whole is still awaited.

Part I

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE
PARSIS IN INDIA

THE STRUCTURE, SIGNIFICANCE AND POETIC INTEGRITY OF THE *QESSE-YE SANJĀN*

Alan Williams

Introduction

The *Qesse-ye Sanjān* (hereafter *QS*) is a late sixteenth-century Zoroastrian text in Persian, comprising some 433 verses (couplets). According to Wehr's Arabic dictionary, the root *qassa* 'cut, trim' yields the noun *qissa* 'manner of cutting' and, by extension, 'narrative, tale, story'; closely related is the word *qasas* 'clippings, cuttings, chips, snips, shreds, narrative, tale, story'. Steingass's *Persian-English Dictionary* has (inimitably) a string of meanings for Persian *qissalqesse* 'a thing, affair, business, negotiation, history, tale, romance, fable, apologue, narration, pudenda'. Unlike English 'history', or contrastingly 'tale' or 'fable', there are no strong implications of either facticity or of make-believe in the word *qesse*. It is, more neutrally, 'text' (that is strands woven together), or 'narrative'. It begins with the poet, Bahman Kay Kobād, singing in the first line:

be nām-e izad-e dānāy-ye sobhān

In God's name, Who is Wise, the Most
Sublime

be har dam mi sorāyam نکته az jān

my soul sings His Delights in every moment.

A little later, after the initial doxology, he begins to tell us what he has in store:

*konun beshnow shegefti dāstānhā
agar guyam be taqrirash nagonjad
valikan man az-u andak bejuyam
shenidastam man az dānāy dastur
hamu zand o avestā khānde bude*

Now listen to the tales of wondrous things
I tell it, but it's not contained in telling,

*ze goft-e mowbadān o bāstānhā
be kāghaz nīz tahrirash nagonjad
sokhan gar sad bovad man yak beguyam
ke hamvāre be khubi bud mashhur
ze khwod ahremanān rā rānde bude*

told in the lore of priests and ancient sages.
and writing cannot limit it to paper.

But I would seek to tell a little portion: I came to know it from a wise dastur	for every hundred words, I'll say just one. whose goodness made him famous for all time.
He'd read the whole Avesta and the Zand, (verses 64–8)	he'd rid himself of Ahreman's dark forces.

and then, with a nice assonance of *bāstān*, *dāstān*, *rāstān* and *rāzhā-ye rāstān*, he makes clear what we are about to hear:

<i>ze goft-e bāstān in dāstān goft</i>	<i>nehāni rāzhā-ye rāstān goft</i>
<i>be yak ruz u be mā in qesse gofte</i>	<i>be niku'i dor-e akhbār softe</i>
<i>hamān dastur in qesse be man goft</i>	<i>verā niki hamishā bād hamjoft</i>
<i>ze goftārash hekāyat bāz guyam</i>	<i>ze kār-e mard-e behdīn rāz guyam</i>

He told this tale just as the ancients told it, One day it was he told this story to us, For that dastur who told this tale to me I shall recount the story in his words, (verses 73–6)	he spoke the hidden mysteries of the righteous. strung beautifully the pearls of past events. may goodness be his ever-present friend. I'll tell the secret deeds of Zoroastrians.
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The author sees himself as stringing together, from the traditions of 'the ancients', the 'precious pearls of past events', private and hidden to all except the faithful.

But texts become public property and now, for over 150 years, Parsi and western scholars have been scrutinizing the *QS* to see what they can find of historical significance in the text. My study of the *QS*, which was begun several years ago and took me to Bombay and Navsāri to find manuscripts of the text, was interrupted by work on classical Persian, Sufi poetry. When I first encountered the *QS* in Persian I thought it had largely been misinterpreted by scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; now, as a result of having worked on texts of the highest calibre in Persian literature, I think that the misinterpretation of the *QS* results, in part at least, from its having been underestimated as religious poetry. By treating it as poetry, by translating it into English blank verse metre, and by examining the features of the text which define it as a religious poem, I find that its structure and unity declare something significant. In order to understand it, I suggest, one must read it with the tools of literary, religious and social, as well as historical, criticism. This is the remit of my forthcoming monograph of the *QS*, of which this is a preliminary, brief synopsis.

The *QS* and poetic form

The *QS* is written in one of the standard classical Persian metres called *bahr-e hazaj*, or 'shaking metre'. The metre *hazaj* has the basic element of the foot

(*rokn*) *mafā'ilon* U---; the *QS* uses the most standard form of the metre for long narrative poems in which each verse (*bayt*) comprises two hemistiches (*mesrā'*) of three repetitions of *mafā'ilon*, and of which the last foot of each *mesrā'* is shortened (apocopated) by one syllable to U-- (the last syllable can also be short). Hence the full *bayt* is:

U --- / U --- / U -- U --- / U --- / U --

as in:

ze kār-e dīn konun guyam khabardār

chonān shod bāz behdīn zār o bizār

I speak now of Religion's fate, so listen,

how once again our noble faith was
weakened.

(verse 81)

This *bayt* of 22 syllables is thus the *masnavi* variety of the *bahr-e hazaj*. A *masnavi* is a narrative poem in couplets, that is verses in which the rhyme occurs only twice, at the end of each *mesrā'* (that is aa, bb, cc, dd, ee). According to L. P. Elwell-Sutton (1950: 245), 'this strongly suggests a connection with the poetry of the Pahlavi books, where the eleven syllable line is also the norm, though the metrical pattern is less clear', but I can neither confirm nor refute this claim. Because this form of *hazaj* contains six feet (*arkān*) in all, its full name is *bahr-e hazaj-e mosaddas-e mahzuf* ('the six-fold, apocopated shaking metre'). The most famous classical Persian poems in this metre are Nezāmi's *Khosrov o Shirin*, Faridoddin-e 'Attār's *Elāhīnāme* and *Asrār-nāme*, and Mahmud-e Shabestāri's *Golshān-e Rāz*. However, as a Zoroastrian text written in a classical metre of Persian literature, the *QS* has a somewhat marginal, hybrid status as a work of non-Muslim religious literature composed in India. In fact its genre and style owe as much to the Sasanian or even older epic and religious story as to sixteenth-century Indian or even twelfth-century Persian texts. On the other hand, as the *QS* was written by a well-educated priest, from a notable family of *dasturs* ('authorities' of the religion) who was well versed in Persian literature, the folk element in the text is minimal, and allusions in the text are to religious and literary sources, not to folk tradition. In short, if modern scholars are irked by the lack of recognisably historical detail, and by Bahman's apparently casual account of history and the passing of time, it is because they have not appreciated that the purpose of this story is to articulate a collective memory of survival and evolution in a memorable poem, not to transmit a historical record of the past, as we conceive it in modernity.

Approaching the *QS*

I set out below what I consider to be the underlying narrative structure of the *QS*. I argue that it is composed in accordance with a traditional Zoroastrian epistemology, founded on the eschatological dualism of the religion. This eschatologically founded epistemology seems, still in the sixteenth century (and perhaps down to the present day), to define basic notions of progress and process in Parsi culture. The *QS* refers to the Zoroastrian tradition going back to the prophet Zarathushtra and forward to the time of writing in 1599 CE. It is a work which has wielded inspirational power and influence in the community: endurance, enthusiasm, fidelity and solidarity with the religious tradition are emphasised throughout. However, it is not a religious work such as we find in the Avestan and Pahlavi books, nor even such as the Persian *Sad Dars* and *Revāyats*, which also use verse forms, throughout and in part respectively. Although it was composed by a priest, Bahman Kay Kobād, it has tended to be regarded by modern readers rather as a folk chronicle, of limited religious and literary significance, but of some vague historical value. I argue that understanding of the structure is necessary for an appreciation of the *QS* as a religious work. From an analysis of the text's structure, through linguistic and literary study and reflection on the social and historical context of the *QS* (which do not form part of the present essay), I find much that has been missed by modern readers as a result of regarding the *QS* as such a 'folk chronicle'.¹

One cause of misinterpretation of the *QS* is that nowadays it is generally read in inadequate translations; in recent times it is seldom, if ever, read in its original verse form since Persian fell out of use in the Parsi community in the nineteenth century. Translations into Gujarati and English verse and prose have been varied in quality and have all too often obliterated the poetic form of the Persian original. The other reason for misunderstanding is that, as mentioned before, Parsi and western scholars have preferred to use the text primarily as a historical, or quasi-historical, source to establish *facts* about the early history of their own community in India. This is, after all, understandable as the *QS* was seen, as S. H. Hodivala put it, as 'the only source of our knowledge of the early history of the Indian Parsis', and as 'indispensable to all serious students of the early history of our people' (Hodivala 1920: 67).² In the past 150 years, therefore, the *QS* has been read more often as a rough history of the physical emigration of the Iranian Zoroastrians to India. But the *QS* is, emphatically, not a text about the physical journey of the Parsis to India. To view it as such is to overlook more than half of the text: the physical journey *to* the subcontinent ends around verse 191 of 433. The remainder is of equal, if not greater, importance as it tells of how the émigré community had to undergo a process of religious and social evolutionary journeys in order to become 'Indian' – a process which in fact continued beyond the text into the twentieth century. In the accounts of fierce clashes in

battle, as allies of the indigenous Hindu forces against invading Muslims, the Persians are said to have given their lives for India, mixing their blood with the Indian earth:

*tu guyi shod jahān anduda az qir
az ān nizevarān o gurzdarān
zamin o āsmān shod tire o tār*

*daru tābān shode almās-gun tir
kasi kam mānd ākher az hazārān
shode chun lāle khāk az khun-e sālār*

You'd say that all the world was smeared with
pitch,
And out of all the mace-bearers and
spearsmen
The land and the sky turned deepest red and
black,
(verses 295–7)

all stuck with arrows glistening like diamonds.
in all their thousands few remained alive.
the earth was tulip-red with soldiers' blood.

The underlying Zoroastrian eschatological myth of struggle against evil finds threefold resolution in the establishment of the religion and society of Iran in the Parsi presence in India:

- through the symbolic enthronement of their new monarch, the Irān Shāh *āteshbahrām* on Indian territory (and related to this the evolution of the roles and relations between priesthood and laity);
- through the libation of Persian blood on Indian earth (and the consequent evolution of the warrior class into a mercantile class);
- through artisan and mercantile settlement (the text makes no mention of any pastoral or agrarian culture).

If the *QS* is not correctly interpreted as a folk chronicle, then how *can* we discover on the one hand the intentions of the author, and on the other hand the significance of the text to those who read it, listened to it, learned it and copied it in the several centuries before the period of urban modernity in the colonial and post-colonial world? A few years ago the anthropologist Paul Axelrod made mention of the *QS* as myth when he suggested 'that the myth provides a charter of the capacity of the contemporary Parsi community to provide its members with a characteristic, and separate, identity' (Axelrod 1980: 150–65). It is doubtless true that the *QS* is a myth which has contributed greatly to the individual and collective identity of the Parsi community; this is, however, a vague summary, and is couched in the somewhat anachronistic language of modern social science. Axelrod came to the conclusion that the *QS* is a charter of Parsi attitudes of respect, mild arrogance and insecurity with regard to their position in Indian society and with other Indians. This it may be, and he is perhaps correct in saying that a key feature of Parsi identity has been its uncertainty as to whether they belong to or are distinct from the rest of the Indian population. The *QS*, says Axelrod, is important for Parsis' perception of themselves, as at once

integrated into Indian society and as an exclusive, even superior, component part of it. Indeed, he points out, the Parsis failed to develop any internal stratification, such as other immigrant groups did in adapting the forms of the caste system for themselves and using *jajmani* relations among themselves and outsiders. However, Axelrod moved on to other matters quickly and did not further consider the nature of the story and its closely woven structure. I would suggest that although this explanation of the text may have some plausibility from an objective academic, social scientific, point of view, it is a rather negative valuation of the text. I do not think that it ‘tells the whole story’. Just as in the case of the overly historicist reading of the text, the anthropologist’s view of the text as mythic charter or *rite de passage* does not come to terms with the text itself and its significance for the religious community.

In order to explain my more positive valuation of this text, in this chapter I could have gone on to discuss aspects of the rhetorical and poetical dimension of the *QS*; in particular I could have considered the literary topoi of point of view, register, metaphor, simile, parallelism, repetition and other structures of intensification which Bahman employs with considerable skill in his narrative, along with an analysis of the language of the text (for example frequency of Arabic and Iranian words in different passages, types of verb used, etc.) and literary features. It could be argued, on this basis, that Bahman is a more sophisticated poet than has been hitherto acknowledged, so that an appreciation of the *QS* must in effect be an appreciation of Bahman’s artistry. In addition, I could have discussed the historical content and context of the *QS*, relating internal evidence to other, historical sources. All this, which forms part of my forthcoming monograph, is too much of detail for the present volume and I confine myself to outlining only some ideas on the structure of poetic unity in the text.

The narrative and its structure

Bahman says in verse 420 of the *QS*:

noh o shast ast o noh sad yazdejerdi

My pen has told this story in the year

sane kin qesse shod khāme navardi

nine-hundred-sixty-nine since Yazdegird.

The *QS* was written, according to this Zoroastrian date (the only date) in the text, in 1599, that is exactly at the threshold of the pre-modern period, at the time of the great, imperial, post-medieval monarchies in England, India, Iran, Russia and Spain. Europeans had already gained a foothold in Gujarat some seventy years before, when the Sultan of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah, had made a treaty with the Portuguese to help him resist the invading Mughal emperor Humayun. Yet the *QS* says next to nothing of the events of its own

century, remaining silent about the emperor Akbar I who, in his long reign (1556–1605), brought together diverse ethnic elements in his government, and, equally famously, invited diverse faiths and philosophies to meet in the cultural life of his court.³ Nor is there any mention of the Safavid Shah reigning in Iran, the illustrious Abbas I (1587–1629). In other words, there is little that can be confirmed by reference to the known events of history. This has created a problem of credibility for nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, who were keen to find external verification in Persian, Arabic, Indian or European sources for what is said in the *QS*. The *QS* is brief and, apparently, inexact even on the subjects of the scriptures, rituals and doctrines of the Zoroastrian religion. It is uninformative and apparently unconcerned about large gaps in its narrative of the existence of the Zoroastrian community in India, jumping across several centuries at a leap with an almost casual disdain for the passage of time, for example:

bedinsān hafstad sāle gozashte
chu chandi sāliān bar vey gozashte

dar ān shahrash basi awlād gashte
baru kaj āsmān zingune gashte

In this way seven hundred years went by,
When many years had overtaken them,
(verses 240–1)

in that town many of his children lived.
and crooked heaven took them in this way . . .

The key to understanding the apparent ahistoricity and inexactitude of the text is to see its fundamentally religious-mythological conception and design: it is concerned with larger themes than the syntagmatic chain of the narrative of events of this world. For this reason, as it unfolds the narrative of events, the *QS* also tells the story in the manner of three paradigmatic stages:

- 1 origins, sojourn and defeat of the religion (in Iran);
- 2 arrival, dispersal, victory, revenge and temporary defeat (in India);
- 3 reconstitution and resolution for the future (up to Bahman's present day in India).

I have drawn a synoptic chart of the structure of the text below in order to show how the events of the story of the text (the syntagmatic chain of the horizontal axis) are told according to a Zoroastrian paradigm, represented on the vertical axis based upon the Zoroastrian understanding of the eschatological process inherent in the movement of time created by Ahura Mazdā/Ohrmazd. I do not offer this account of the *QS* as if it were some structuralist theory of the text, with a whole canister of Levi-Straussian/Lacanian psychoanalytical vermicules. Rather it is akin to a *Zoroastrian* reading of the text, that is I make explicit what is traditionally left implicit in the text through a relational analysis of the language, form and contents.

Résumé of the narrative

In place of the full text I here offer a brief résumé of the narrative as follows, with references to the Synoptic Chart below.

- A1 Bahman addresses God (as ‘He’), and God is praised, in himself (as You), and
- A2 as creator of the human body and mind on behalf of humankind. By verses 23–5 a close relationship is set up between God (You) and the author (I), and
- A3 Bahman asks for divine mercy and blessing in the longest section of this introductory doxology.

- B1 the author begins by inviting the reader to listen and he explains how he received this story (verses 64–76). The story begins (verse 77) by going back to the time of Zarathushtra, who himself predicts the events of history (verses 78–80) as the alternation between successive times of flourishing and oppression of the ‘noble faith’ (*din-e behi*). Bahman explains that each time the faith is established by a good king (first, implicitly, by Wishtāsp and Zartosht), it is subsequently attacked by a tyrant (first Alexander), then by an accused evil spirit (perhaps Mani), then by the *joddins* ‘infidels’ (Muslims).
- B2 The Zoroastrians were forced to take to the hills after the defeat of the last Zoroastrian king, Yazdegird III, and there they remained a hundred years. They moved on to Hormuz on the south coast of Iran, where they stayed for fifteen more years. They were forced by more Muslim oppression to leave Iran and they sailed towards India. They landed on an island⁴ off the coast of India and stayed there another nineteen years. Eventually an astrologer among them bade them sail on and they set off and headed into a storm. In fear of their lives they prayed to heaven and promised to establish a fire to the *yazad* Bahrām if he would rescue them. The storm abated and they were saved and reached the coast of India.
- B3 The band of Persians was met by a local ruler: he at first mistrusted them, but was later assured of their good faith and allowed them to remain to establish a settlement on certain conditions. They agreed and, soon after, set up a fire sacred to Bahrām as they had promised, which was the temple of the fire called Irān Shāh, king of Iran. The poem then mentions how the centuries passed and the Parsis prospered and spread throughout the surrounding area.

- C1 The text then moves forward by seven centuries to a time much more recent to Bahman’s. News comes of the imminent arrival of hostile Muslim armies of king Mahmud Shah. The Parsis are invited by the Hindu ruler to help resist the attack and they boldly enlist in the army.

- C2 In the first battle the Hindus are routed and the Parsis, vastly outnumbered, save the day led by the hero Ardashir in a grisly scene of carnage and gore, but 'In the battlefield Islam was laid low, for it was slain in the battle with the rajah-prince'.
- C3 The next day there is another ferocious battle. Ardashir challenges and slays the Muslim warrior hero, but the Muslim general is so angered to see this that he demands the slaughter of all opponents.
- D1 The Zoroastrians are again scattered and flee to the hills, this time for twelve years, taking with them their sacred Irān Shāh fire. They go to Bānsdah and are greeted by a tumultuous reception, where the Irān Shāh fire is established in its own precincts and is served by the community.
- D2 A new phase of Parsi history begins as the layman Changā Āsā appears. He makes the pilgrimage to the Irān Shāh fire and subsequently proposes that they remove the fire from Bānsdah to Navsāri.
- D3 The fire is removed to Navsāri and established there, and the community is seen to prosper and grow in faith and happiness.
- E1 Bahman praises God.
- E2 Bahman calls down blessings on his teacher, ancestor.
- E3 Bahman calls down blessings on himself and the reader.

The *QS* has many characteristics typical of religious myth. The text switches between a view backwards and forwards as religious myths generally do, and historical texts generally do not. It describes much more than a sequence of human actions and events in the world; rather it accounts for the unfolding of events as something foreordained by destiny. But just as the events leading to the downfall of the religion are predicted by the prophet Zartosht/Zarathushtra himself, so also the faithful have been taught by their religion to display fortitude, endurance and optimism in the face of the blows of fate. The underlying religious-didactic theme of the *QS* is no more nor less than the Zoroastrian eschatological-soteriological programme of action for progress in a world which is open to attack from evil. This religious teaching in the *QS* is achieved not by exhortation in the narrative, as so often in Pahlavi and other priestly Zoroastrian texts, but it is embedded in the threefold structure of the poem.

The syntagmatic and paradigmatic text

The main body of the narrative B–D is enclosed by an introductory (A), and valedictory (E) doxology: these doxologies are stylistic, religious and practical features, as they observe literary convention, religious obligation to auspicious dedication and imprecation, and afford material protection to the

central part of the manuscript. Between the introductory and valedictory doxologies there are three main sections,⁵ of unequal length, in a syntagmatic chain of narrative:

- B. journey from the origins to settlement in India (verses 64–224);
- C. dispersal, victory and defeat in India (verses 225–352);
- D. journey of the *āteshbahrām* (verses 353–402).

The unfolding of events on the horizontal syntagmatic axis of the chart (A–E) is rendered into poetic unity by a corresponding threefold development along the vertical paradigmatic axis (1–3). Zoroastrian liturgical performance generally falls into the threefold structure of preliminary, principal and closing rite. An example of this sequence is to be found in the Zoroastrian ritual technique of pronouncing the opening and closing *bāj*, a protective form of words, before and after prayers in the Avestan language and other acts of high religious significance.⁶ The threefold process is narrated most dramatically in the stories of the cosmogonic-eschatological myths of Zoroastrianism. As Mary Boyce (1975: 229ff.) outlined them, three times are distinguished as defining Ohrmazd's divine plan for existence: 'Creation' (Pahlavi *bundahishn*), 'Mixture' (*gumēzishn*) and 'Resolution' (*wizārishn*):

- 1 *bundahishn*: in the beginning there is the primeval balance of eternal pre-existence, in which Ohrmazd abides on high in Endless Light separated from evil, which lurks abysmally in Endless Darkness, by a void (Pahlavi *tuhīgth*). Ohrmazd is, however, aware of the jealous, hostile spirit Ahriman/Gannāg Mēnōg. In response, and in order that evil may be defeated in a limited time, Ohrmazd created the time of the twelve thousand years, and fashioned a perfect spiritual and material creation of unique elements.
- 2 *gumēzishn*: Ahriman attacks and corrupts the perfect elemental creation, and there follows the period of 'Mixture' (*gumēzishn*) of good and evil, in which the individual and community of humankind have a decisive role in protecting the divine creation by means of Zarathushtra's religion, which is sent to teach humankind how to worship Ohrmazd, practise virtue and smite evil in thought, word and deed;
- 3 *wizārishn*: the forces of goodness and order will prevail over evil and disorder, at the time of *frashegird* 'Renovation', with the judgment and salvation of all souls. There will be a *wizārishn*, 'Separation', of good from evil, which is achieved when evil shall be annihilated and the spiritual and physical conditions of existence will coalesce in a state of perfection; the perfection of the creation will resemble that of the *bundahishn*, but it will have been transformed into a new state of perfection in multiplicity and paradisiacal fecundity on earth as the *mēnōg* and *gētīg* worlds are merged into one another.

Table 2.1 Synoptic chart of the narrative structure of *Qesse-ye Sanjān* A1–E3

	A	B	C	D	E
Eschatological time	Opening doxology	Journey of the community	Dispersal, victory and defeat in India	The journey of the <i>Ātashbahhrām</i>	Closing doxology
1. <i>Bundahishn</i> 'Creation' Past	1–10 In praise of God	64–97 History a. Zoroaster, Gushtāsp . . . Alexander b. Ardā Virāz, Ardashir . . . Evil Spirit c. Ādurbād, Shāpur . . . Joddins End of the Millennium of Zoroaster	224–42 Dispersal and prosperity for 700 years	353–66 Dispersal of the Parsis a. to the hill of Bahārūt b. Dispersal of the community c. Irān Shāh fire is taken to Bānsdah	403–5 In praise of God
2. <i>Gumēzishn</i> 'Mixture' Present	11–21 Humankind Nature of humankind and relationship with God	98–135 Removal a. to Kuhestān (100 years) and to Hormuz (15 years) in Iran b. to Diu (19 years) off Indian Coast c. to mainland India via storm (117–35)	243–311 1st Battle Against Islam a. threat of attack and recruitment of Persians to Hindu army b. Hindus routed c. Ardashir and Persians save the day	367–92 Removal of Fire a. Layman Changā Āsā goes on pilgrimage in Bānsdah b. returns home to Navsāri c. proposes move of Iran Shān fire to Navsāri	406–14 Blessings on the author's teacher and ancestors and pillars of the religion
3. <i>Wizārishn</i> 'Resolution' Future	22–63 Blessings and forgiveness on the soul of the author	136–223 Arrival of the Zoroastrians in India & establishing of the Irān Shāh a. encounter of the dastur and the rajah b. conditions of settlement and agreement c. establishment of the Irān Shāh	312–52 2nd Battle Against Islam a. Ardashir slays the Muslim champion b. Ulugh Khan has Ardashir & Hindu rajah slain in a surprise attack c. Hindu-Persian forces perish	393–402 Arrival of the Iran Shān fire in Navsāri	415–32 Blessings on the author and reader by and for one another

These three times are fundamental to the theology of the ninth-century Zoroastrian books: the process they describe is explanatory of the present, relative, existential condition of the physical world of ‘mixture’, in which the struggle of good and evil in the world results in both victory and defeat. The three times also define the goal of Zoroastrian soteriology as the bringing about of *frashegird* at the end of the *wizārishn*, when evil shall have been annihilated. Zoroastrian salvation history is based upon such dynamics and their variations. This understanding of the eschatological nature of *purposeful history* has, it might seem to the modern eye, been ingeniously incorporated into the story of the Persian/Parsi emigration and assimilation to India in the form of a poem. It seems fairer to the material to assume that the memorisation of a significant story has been, more or less, expressed in the traditional ways of understanding the processes of change and development. This schema is not rigidly adhered to, and it may be objected that sometimes the text does not rigidly conform to it, but in general it governs the shape of the *QS*. Without going into detail here, it must also be added that the author Bahman Kay Kobād is by no means an invisible or shrinking figure in the text, and he fashions his story to bring to the fore certain interests which he, as a Sanjana priest in Navsāri, represented in his day.

In order to illustrate how the paradigmatic structure works in conjunction with the syntagmatic line of the narrative, I give the example of B1–3, namely the best-known section of the *QS*, which tells of the physical journey from Iran to India. In B, the first episode (64–97) may be seen as following the pattern of the eschatological time of *bundahishn* as it narrates events from the beginning of their religion down to the end of the millennium of Zarathushtra. In this account Zarathushtra himself tells of three tyrants who will in turn bring about the decline of the religion in Iran and the end of his millennium. This is the end of the first beginning:

chu az zartusht sāl āmad hazāre
chu az shah yazdegar shāhi berafte
az ān moddat shekaste gasht irān

ze din-e beh hami āmad kenāre
ke joddin āmad o takhtash gerefte
darigh ān molk-e dīn oftād virān

When the millennium year of Zartusht
 came,
 And when the kingship left King Yazdegar,
 From that time forth Iran was smashed to
 pieces.
 (verses 95–7)

the limit of the Noble Faith came too.
 when infidels arrived and took his throne,
 Alas! That land of faith now gone to ruin!

The passage B2 (98–135) sees the domination of Iran after the invasion of alien forces of infidels: this corresponds to the eschatological time of *gumēzishn*, that is the mythological invasion of evil forces into the universe: the faithful uproot themselves three times until they are forced to leave Iran altogether:

*bedāngāhi shode har kas parākand
chu behdinān o dasturān sarāsār
maqām o jāy o bāgh o kākḥ o eyvān*

At that time all who kept their hearts in faith
When every single layman and dastur
Left homes, lands, gardens, villas, palaces
(verses 98–100)

*har ānku dāsht del bar zand o pāzand
ze kār-e dīn nehān gashtand yaksar
hame bogzāshtand az bahr-e dīnshān*

with Zand and Pāzand spread in all
directions.
went into hiding for Religion's sake.
they left all for the sake of their Religion.

The crossing to India, in two stages, from Hormuz to Diu, and from Diu to Sanjān, is obstructed in the second stage by the storm at sea, over which the migrants prevail only by imploring Bahrām/Verethrāghna to rescue them and heaven instantly responds:

*ke ey dānā tu yāri ras dar in kār
be yāri ras tu ey bahrām-e firuz
be loṭf-e tu gham az tufān nadārim
tu khwod faryād ras bichāragān rā
azin gharqāb gar yābam rahā'i
azin daryā agar dar keshvar-e hend
foruzim ātash-e bahrām-e pānā
paziroftim māyān in ze karkar
ze yumn-e ātash-e bahrām-e firuz
hamān sā'at qabul uftād zāri*

'Wise Lord, come to our rescue in this plight,
Deliver us, victorious Bahrām,
By your grace we'll not suffer from the storm
Will You defend the helpless ones Yourself?
If we should find salvation from this
whirlpool,
If from this sea we reach the land of Hend
We'll light a Fire of Bahrām, our Protector,
We've undertaken this ourselves with God,
They were all blessed in their adversity
The very moment when their cry was heard
(verses 123–32)

*azin sakhti rahān mā rā be yak bār
azin moshkel marā gardān tu behruz
harāsi dar del o jān mi nayārim
nomā'i rāḥ tu gom kardagān rā
na hargez pish āyad zin balā'i
rasim ānjā be del shādān khorsand
azin sakhti rahān o kon tuvānā
ke joz vey mā nadārim ich digar
az-ān sakhti hame gashtand behruz
khodā dar kār-e ishān dād yāri*

save us from this calamity at once!
make things auspicious for us in this
plight!
there'll be no dread within our hearts or
souls.
Reveal the way to us who've lost our way!
and no disaster falls on us again,
and are contented there with happy hearts,
O save us from this plight and make us
strong!
apart from Him we have no other help.'
by fortune of victorious Bahrām's Fire.
God gave them succour in their difficulties.

What makes this act of self-dedication to Bahrām/Varahrām more poignant at this moment when all may be lost, is that, as Boyce has put it,

Varahram was not only venerated for his immediate power to help,
but was longed for as an eschatological figure, whose visible coming

would one day herald the restoration of the Good Religion, the overthrow of its persecutors, and the glorious end of time.

(Boyce 1977: 71)

This is the beginning of the first ending, on the paradigm of the eschatological time of *wizārishn*, because there now follows a resolution to the tumultuous first section of the journey, in B3. This is the longest single section, the 88 verses which are perhaps best known to Parsis today, telling of the first encounter of the Persians with an Indian rajah; in fact it is a passage which is not altogether straightforward. Parsis today generally know a popular elaboration of the story, with folkloric additions (for example a scene on the shore, and an episode likening the arrival of the Persians to the mixing of sugar into a bowl of milk). The text begins simply:

*chonin hokm-e qazā shod ham az ān pas
yaki rājā-ye nik ānjāy bude
mar u rā nām jādi rāna'i bud
abā hedyē be pishash raft dastur
dō'āyash kard goft ey rāy-e rāyān
gharibānim o mā andar panāhat
ze bahr-e dīn shodastim andarin jāy*

*suyē sanjān rasidand ān hame kas
sar-e khwod rā darun pāki goshude
sakhi o 'āqel o farzāne'i bud
ke u dar 'elm o dānesh bud mashhur
darin shahri bedeh tu jāy māyān
rasidastim dar shahr o maqāmāt
shenidastim chun budast yak rāy*

And after that it was the will of Fate
There was a goodly rajah in that place,
The rajah, by the name of Jādi Rāna,
The dastur went before him bearing gifts:

that every one of them arrived at Sanjān.
whose inner mind was open to the holy.
was generous, intelligent and learned.
he was renowned for knowledge and for
wisdom.

He paid him his respects 'O prince of princes,
For we are strangers, we have come to you
We've come here for the sake of our religion:

will you give us a place in this domain?
for refuge and a home within your land.
for we have heard what kind of prince is
here.

(verses 136–42)

The discussions are, after an initial suspicion on the part of the rajah, amicable, and he sets out conditions of settlement, among which is the request for an account of the religion (152). The Zoroastrian leader gives the rajah an account of the faith (167–80) of which a disproportionately long section (172–80) is on purity rules for Zoroastrian females;⁷ all of this is reassuring to the rajah:

*chu az dīn-e behi asrār goftand
chu hendu rāja in goftār-e dastur*

*be ahsan vajh dorr-e nokte softand
shenid o sar be sar del gashit māmūr*

Now when the Hindu rajah heard the dastur
As they described the secrets of their faith,
(verses 182–3)

his heart regained its equilibrium.
they strung the pearls of subtlety with skill.

The text implicitly confirms that the old alliance between religion and state in the persons of priest and king (Zarathushtra:Gushtasp, Ardā Virāz: Ardashir, Shāpur:Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān, in B1a, b, c) is valid in India as well as in Iran, and that it may be re-established. First, however, certain assurances and conditions have to be made. The rajah's own doubts about the threat posed by the new arrivals is a reflection of the Parsi concern to retain their autonomy within a new environment. Once they have gained a place of residence and refuge, they ask for a place to set up the Fire of Bahrām, in fulfilment of their promise made at sea. The rajah agrees immediately and there follows a passage describing the drawing out, consecration and celebration of the *āteshbahrām*. This ending is a resolution of the first section, B, of the journey, and as suggested above, may be seen to correspond to the *wizārishn* of eschatological time, being a triumphant return to the original perfection of the beginning (B1) but diversified in accordance with the conditions of the world:

*be rasm-e dīn hame pirān o dastur
dar ān ayyām dīn dāneste budand
dar in durān khodā dānad che dīnast
dar ān keshvar hame behdīn o dastur*

*shah-e irān nishānde nur por nur
bedān dānesh amal dar dīn nomudand
amal kardan be dīn ākher yaqīnast
yaki jashni nomude khāse bā sur*

The priests and elders followed their tradition
In those days they knew all about their faith:

enthroned the King of Iran, light on light.
and in that knowledge practised their
Religion.

In our time God knows what is true Religion:
And all the priests and laymen in that country
(verses 220–3)

at least the rites are certain in our faith.
prepared a special *jashn* with a feast.

There is no opportunity here to give a full account of the combination of paradigmatic and syntagmatic movements to the end of the *QS*. My thesis is that the rest of the text continues in this way. The cohesion of the text as a poetic unity is most dramatically displayed in the accounts of ferocious battles in C2, where the most heroic aspects of the Zoroastrian warrior character are on display. Truly, the faithful Zoroastrians (who are always referred to as *behdīnān*, *mard-e behdīn*, *behdīn-e dīndār*, not *zartoshtiyān*) are the heroes of the battles alongside their Hindu allies in the victories against vastly greater numbers of Ulugh Khan's Muslim hordes. After a double victory, which smacks of sweet revenge served cold for their defeat in Iran centuries before (verses 96–7), they suffer tragic defeat with the double slaying of Ardashir the Iranian hero and the rajah prince, in a passage which owes more than a little to Ferdousi's accounts of Zāl, Rostam and Sohrāb in the *Shāhnāme*. I quote the following 'purple' passage in full, both because it is nowadays a relatively little-known section, and also because it expresses a deeper mythological meaning of the *QS* which has only been alluded to in this essay:

yaki bā ardashir āvāz dāde
be nazd-e tu biyāmad ham-nabardi
hamāngah ardashirash dād āvāz
be meydān har du ham chun sher gashtand
be ākher ardashir āmad baru chir
kamand afkand o u rā dar keshide
ulugh khān chu mar u rā did koshte
befarmud āngahi tā fāres o rāy
be poshti-ye sepāh āmad chu kin khwāh
sadāy-e tighhā āmad chakāchāk
chu du ruye sepah āvikhte shod
bar āmad mowj az daryā-ye khunin
na jā mānad ke dar vey mur ganjad
pas āngah ardashir andar miyāne
yaki nāvak biyāmad bar miyānash
tanash az zakhmhā sosti nomude
beyoftād ardashir az zin nigunsar
darighā ān sepahdār-e delāvar
chu bakht-e shum khashm ārad bedānjā
agar chandi nabard u kusheshi kard
ze du jāneb sepah shod koshte besyār
hamāngah koshte shod ān rāy zāde
darighā ān niku shahzāde hendu

And one of them called out to Ardashir,
 An adversary is going out to face you:
 That instant Ardashir called out to him:

Both men became like lions on the plain,
 When Ardashir prevailed with him at last,
 He threw his lasso and he dragged him
 forward,
 When Ulugh Khan beheld him lying slain,
 He ordered that the horseman and the prince
 Behind his troops he thrustured for revenge
 The noise of clashing swords began again,
 And as the armies struggled on both sides
 A wave came rushing from a bloody sea
 An ant could find no place upon that field,
 Then Ardashir advanced and took the centre:
 An arrow pierced him through the abdomen
 His body was enfeebled by the wounds:
 Then Ardashir fell headlong from the saddle –
 Alas for such a valiant commander
 When inauspicious fate has turned to anger

konun hoshyār bāsh ey pākzāde
konun benmāy az khwod dastbordi
ke āmad ham-nabardat bā hame sāz
ze jān-e khwish har du sir gashtand
ze pusht-e shulak afkande verā zir
forud āmad ze asb o sar boride
del-e u rā az ān porr dard gashte
shavad koshte namānad zende bar jāy
be jang andar dahā dah khāst āngāh
ravān khun gashte hamchu juy bar khāk
ze tanha khun chu daryā rikhte shod
ze mardom har araf āmad zabunin
vali bi hokm-e ḥaqq kas khwod che sanjad
bemānd ākher rasid u rā zamāne
borun āmad az ān su nāgahānash
ke har ’ozvash ze khun favvāre bude
sepāhi gasht zu hayrān o bi par
ke bar bādash zamāne kard ākhar
be sān-e mum gardad sakht-e khārā
che sud ar bakht bar gashte az ān mard
sarān o nāmdārān-e niku kār
be razm andar yaki ghughā fetāde
bemurd o shahr vayrān gasht har su

‘Now have your wits about you, noble man!
 now is the time to demonstrate your skill.’
 ‘Your adversary has come with all his
 weapons.’
 for both had sickened of their very lives.
 he threw him from the saddle of his horse.
 dismounted from his horse and chopped his
 head off.
 it filled his heart with pain to see him there.
 be killed at once and none be left alive there.
 as if a score of men rose up for battle.
 blood ran in rivers all across the earth.
 blood swelled out of their bodies like a sea.
 and vileness came from men in all directions.
 but then, without God’s law, what is a man?
 at last the hour of Fate had come for him.
 and came out straightaway the other side.
 his every limb became a bloody fountain.
 at this the army lost its head and wings!
 whom fate had scattered to the winds at last!
 the very hardest stone is turned to wax.

And even though he fought and struggled so,	to what avail if Fate had turned away?
On both sides of the battle many perished,	the leaders and the worthy men of glory.
The rajah-prince was also slaughtered there:	there was an uproar on the battlefield.
Alas for that good Hindu prince who died,	on every side his kingdom was laid waste.

(verses 330–52)

The close of the main narrative

Section D, the shortest of the sections of the narrative, describes the eventual settlement of both the Zoroastrian community and their Fire of Bahrām in Navsāri (353–403). The section begins by continuing the parallel with the time of the Arab conquest, as the poet says:

<i>hamān behdīn shode ākher parākand</i>	<i>yaki kuh nām bahārutast dar hend</i>
Those of the Noble Faith were scattered there.	In Hind there is a hill named Bahārut.

(verse 353)

which may be compared with:

<i>bedāngāhi shode har kas parākand</i>	<i>har ānku dāsht del bar zand o pāzand</i>
At that time all who kept their hearts in faith	with Zand and Pāzand spread in all
	directions.

(verse 98)

The faithful have again been obliged to flee for their lives, this time to the hills of Bahārut: the parallel with the flight of the Zoroastrians to the mountains of the region Kuhestān (101) is unavoidable. Here they remained for a while, but for only twelve, not a hundred years. Verse 356 contains a highly significant detail:

<i>pas az moddat ke az hokm-e khodāvand</i>	<i>be rāh āmad hame bā khwīsh o peyvand</i>
A time went by, as was decreed by God,	all found the way of kin and of tradition.

The mentioning of ‘the judgment of God’ and ‘came to the path’ signals the end of the Persians’ suffering and wandering, and the beginning of their reconstitution as a stable community: they bring the King of Iran down from Bahārut and are greeted triumphantly by the people of the town of Bānsdah, as the poet begins to use imagery reminiscent of eschatological myth:

<i>hamāngah khwīsh bā sisad savārān</i>	<i>pazire shod be chandīn nāmdārān</i>
<i>be sad tashrif āvardand dar shahr</i>	<i>chonān chun dardmandi yāft pāzahr</i>
<i>az ānpas bānsdah shod chu bahārān</i>	<i>barīngune gozashte ruzegārān</i>

*pas az vey mardomān az nasl-e behdin
ze bahr-e khedmat-e ān shāh-e irān*

And then three hundred of them riding horses
They brought it to the town with much
thanksgiving,
From that time Bānsdah was like spring had
come
From then on all the folk of good religion,
The men and women and the old, went up
(verses 359–63)

*be har keshvar ke bud ān pāk āyin
berafti az zanān o pir o mardān*

received them with a group of notables,
as when an ailing man receives a cure.⁸
to bloom and in this way the years rolled by.
wherever pure tradition had survived,
to pay their homage to the Irān Shāh.

One detail worth mentioning here is that it is only now for the first time that the name ‘Parsi’ is used in the *QS*:

bedinsān pārsi dar bānsdah niz

And in this way the Persians came to Bānsdah
(verse 365)

ze har jā āmadandi bā basi chiz

from every place, with many offerings.

It is as if, after all the successive *rites de passage*, of travel, crossing, endurance of the violence of nature, social integration, retribution and revenge in battle against Islam, only now is the term ‘Parsi’ applicable, as they have achieved status in India as an identifiable people under their symbolic king, the Irān Shāh fire. The community is as pious and attentive, as in former times at Sanjān, to the fire of Bahrām. After fourteen years like this, Bahman states that heaven turned in their favour. The mayor and merchant saviour of the day, Changā Āsā is heralded with a series of epithets which elevate him to the status of a deliverer:

*yaki behdīn padid āmad dar ān vaqt
be dīndāri biyāmad dar zamāne
dahivad nām-e u changā bin āsā
dar ākher vaqt ān niku khasālat*

At that time there appeared a faithful layman:
By fate he came to succour the Religion,
A mayor he was, his name Changā bin Āsā,
That man of goodly character would not
allow
(verses 367–70)

*nabude mesl-e u kas ānchonan vaqt
padid āmad az u chandī neshāne
ke bā behdīn hami kardi delāsā
behi dīn rā namānde dar ‘etālat*

there had not been one like him for so long.
and several signs were manifested from him.
who treated the Good Faith with soothing
heart.
the faith to come to nought in later times.

The text suggests that the figure of Changā Āsā is expressive of a change of social structure and shift of power from priestly to lay preponderance in the directing of social matters. A new spirit is afoot: the moving of the fire from Bānsdah to Navsāri is a change, instigated by Changā Āsā, which is not

actually a response to religious *necessity* nor requirement, but rather it is done for human convenience and well-being: above all it would be profitable:

azu gardad fuzuntar rizq o ruzi

bovad behdinhā rā del-foruzi

Our livelihood and income would improve:
(verse 391)

there would be happiness for all the *behdins*.

A new cooperative partnership of *del-foruzi* ‘happiness’ is finally established between priesthood and laity, and no more remains to be said, except for the valedictory doxology of blessings upon the Creator, the writer and his family, and the reader.

Conclusion: *QS* as memory of the past and plan for the future

One cannot conclude exactly what a text *means*. In the end meaning remains the legacy of the Zoroastrian community in India, yet scholars may do with the *QS* what they will to interpret it. I have translated it afresh, and done so into what I regard as a comparable English metrical form, of iambic pentameter blank verse. From my analysis I conclude that there is a potent blend of oral and written tradition in the *QS* as it combines a graphically realised structure of basic ideas of Zoroastrian tradition along with the distinctive literary style of the author Bahman Kay Kobād, to make the overall work a compelling religious poem which is an enduring memory of the past and plan for the future for the community. Bahman Kay Kobād’s personality and intentions as poet/author can be seen to loom much larger than was previously noticed by scholars; and in this sense the work is more ‘modern’ than has been thought, as he invests it with a distinctive literary and recognisably ideological power. In my view, the *QS* is a text to be taken more seriously by scholars of religion for what it reveals in its normative and imperative power as a document of the early pre-modern tradition of the Parsis in India.

Notes

- 1 The term ‘folk chronicle’ is itself rather a questionable slur on popular literature as distinct from scriptural and priestly exegetical texts.
- 2 It is significant that Hodivala seems scarcely to have noticed that the text was written in verse couplets, as he counts the 432 couplets of his manuscript as 864 ‘lines’ (as he mistakes the *mesra* that is half-line, for a ‘line’): ‘In the eight hundred and sixty four lines of the *Kissah-i-Sanjan*, we have, committed to writing for the first time, the traditional account of the Flight and first adventures of those ancestors of the Indian Parsis, who, abandoning almost every thing dear on earth for the sake of their pure and ancient Faith, sought refuge on the shores of Hindustan’ (Hodivala 1920: 93).

- 3 Akbar I is mentioned in the later *Qesse-ye Zartushtiān-i Hendustān* (ed. Cereti 1991: 113).
- 4 Diu in the *QS*, from the Hindi word *diu* 'island'.
- 5 There are not 'sections' of the narrative in a literal and formal sense, but rather there is a distinctive rhythm and cadence to the telling of the story which follows well-established Zoroastrian norms.
- 6 See further Boyce and Kotwal (1971) and Williams (1988).
- 7 On this passage see Williams (1999).
- 8 The unexpected simile 'as when an ailing man receives a cure' is evocative of an epithet of Zarathushtra and the eschatological saviour Sōshāns, 'who will heal the world'; *pāzahr* (Pahlavi *pādzahr*) is literally 'antidote', that is against the poison meted out by the demons. Most evocative of an eschatological mood is the image cast in the metaphor of springtime. In chapter 48.107 of the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* the state of the world after the judgment and renovation of the world is described in similar terms: 'And the principal kinds of plants will be restored, and there will be no diminution of them, but every place will be like the spring, resembling a garden in which there will be all kinds of plants and flowers; and with the wisdom of this world it is not possible to comprehend and know its wondrousness and worthiness and pleasantness and purity' (Williams 1990: I, 191; II, 88).

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THE LANDING OF THE ZOROASTRIANS AT SANJAN

The archaeological evidence

*Rukshana Nanji and Homi Dhalla**

Parsis today have a vague idea about their history, almost all of which is an oral tradition, frequently distorted in the telling. Stories about the milk bowl and the good king Jadi Rana¹ have survived in the community memory, but the lines between legend and fact have become so blurred that it is often difficult to tell one from the other. At best, the Parsi sense of history derives from the *Qesse-ye Sanjan* (see Williams in this volume), the quasi-historical text which narrates the story of the Zoroastrian migration from the Iranian homeland to the shores of Gujarat (Figure 3.1). It was with the intention of evaluating the historical veracity of the *Qesse-ye Sanjan* that the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation undertook archaeological excavations at the ancient site of the supposed landing.

Sanjan, today, is a rather nondescript, sleepy little town in south Gujarat, on the western seaboard of the Indian subcontinent. A casual visitor could not be faulted for wondering why a group of Persian migrants would have chosen to settle here rather than elsewhere. Pre-excavation research involved extensive explorations. Preliminary observations and geological fieldwork offered possible explanations for this choice of location. Sanjan is located on the north bank of the Varoli River, a rocky stream which has its origin about 20 km south-east in the hills of Thana and which flows down for a further 5 km or so before debouching into the Arabian Sea at Umbargam-Nargol (Rajaguru and Deo 2005: 95) (Figure 3.2). The ancient settlement is a large mound known today as Sanjan *Bandar* (port), which is presently occupied by fisher-folk, floriculturists and brick-makers. The river is navigable from its mouth only up to this point. The rocky riverbed makes upstream navigation impossible past this mound. The vicinity to the coast and its location on a creek would have made Sanjan an ideal anchorage for sea-going vessels as well as a safe, quiet settlement with easy access to the hinterland and its resources for any group of settlers, particularly traders.

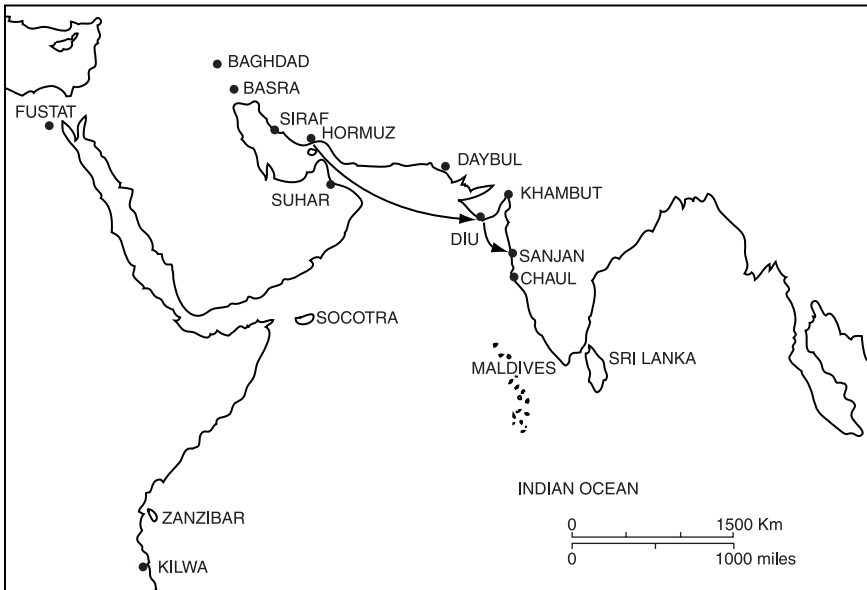


Figure 3.1 Migration route: Hormuz to Sanjan.

Preliminary explorations revealed that the *Bandar*/port settlement was large – measuring at least 1.5 km × 1 km, if not more. The embankment and port site was the urban, and possibly more densely populated, area. But the settlement pattern in the past appears to have been similar to that seen today, with homesteads, farmsteads and small satellite settlements dotting the undulating landscape in the vicinity of the urban center. A large number of brickbat scatters, brick alignments and pottery could be seen during explorations. Silahara and Rashtrakuta period sculptures, datable to the eighth and ninth centuries, some broken and abandoned and some under present worship, can be seen as well, both on the *Bandar*/port and in the surrounding countryside (S. Kadgaonkar, personal communication), but the space to actually put down trenches is severely restricted by modern activity. Agriculture, brick-making, construction work, etc. have all disturbed the site. In some areas the archaeological deposit has been totally removed. Over the three years of fieldwork, four different locations were excavated, bringing to light a rich and illuminating body of material and revealing the spatial as well as chronological distribution of the site. Preliminary reports of all three seasons of excavations have been published (see Gupta *et al.* 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005). However, a brief review of the excavations is in order at this point.

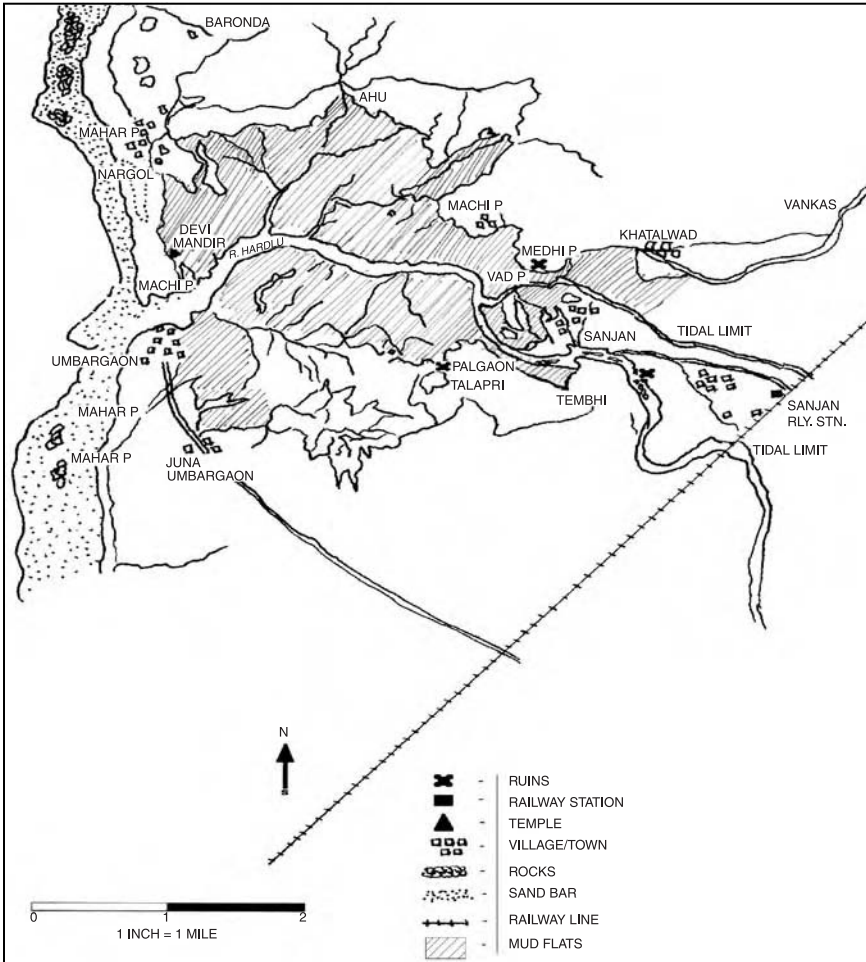


Figure 3.2 Approach to Sanjan: on the Varoli river.

Season 1 (2002): (Gupta *et al.* 2002: 182–98)

The excavations of the first season were restricted to the highest part of the habitation mound at the *Bandar*/port, in the middle of the fishing village. A small area was opened up as a *sondage* or trial trench, measuring 5 m × 7.5 m. Habitation material started to emerge from almost directly under the humus or surface. Large structural phases and features, enormous quantities of Persian Gulf and Iranian ceramics, Chinese wares, glass, metal objects, beads, coins and other antiquities made up the corpus of the collection. The ceramic assemblage was one of the single most important discoveries, not only for the interpretation of the site but also in the light of early medieval studies

in India and Indian Ocean trade networks. The presence of three ringwells (soak pits) was unexpected since it was supposed that the practice had fallen into disuse by the fourth or fifth century (Figure 3.3). Apparently the use of these features continued well into the early medieval period. Ringwells have long been regarded in Indian archaeology as one of the markers of urbanization.² Their presence at Sanjan, coupled with the traded, expensive ceramics implied a thriving urban settlement with extensive contacts between the Far East on the one hand and the Middle East on the other. The ceramics, glass vessels and coins helped provide a tentative chronological bracket for the site, namely the eighth to the thirteenth century AC (Gupta *et al.* 2002: 182–98).

Season 2 (2003): (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 93–106)

It was not possible to continue excavations at the same location in the second season. Trenches were laid at a location about half a kilometer away. The *Koli Khadi* mound was a small but undisturbed site on a creek. This location provided a completely different profile from that of the previous season. The distribution of the pottery was different, yet, while all the indigenous wares were represented and provided the same range as in the previous season, there was a marked absence of the early categories of Chinese wares like Dusun, Celadon, Yeu and white porcelains. Instead, a small number of low-grade Blue and White porcelain sherds were found. West Asian wares were almost totally absent. Most startling by far, however, was the discovery of a mortuary complex, and the subsequent unearthing of six extended human skeletons. The structures in the adjoining trenches consisted of platforms and brick floors with three large inset troughs.

The skeletons were localized in an area measuring approximately 8 m × 8 m and were encountered at a depth of merely 50 cm. There were no discernible burial pits. The orientation of the skeletons was north–south (with the head to the north). The arms were flexed over the midriff or stomach. All the faces were turned to the right/west. The feet were close together, indicating swaddling or binding. Analyses by physical anthropologists show that two skeletons are definitely male and three are female. One could not be identified due to damage and decomposition. Interestingly, they all belong to the age group 35–45 years (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 96; also, Mushrif and Walimbe 2005: 73–92). There were no extraneous marks to denote an unnatural death. The study is still underway and DNA results on these samples are awaited, and hence it would be premature to try to impose an ethnic identity on this group (Mushrif and Walimbe 2005: 73–92).

The ceramic assemblage at this location points to a fourteenth-century date. The habitation deposit was not thick, indicating a short period of occupation. Another interesting observation made by archaeozoologist Pramod Joglekar was the distribution of animal bones and faunal remains, namely the presence of pig, horse and domestic ass bones in the faunal assemblage at

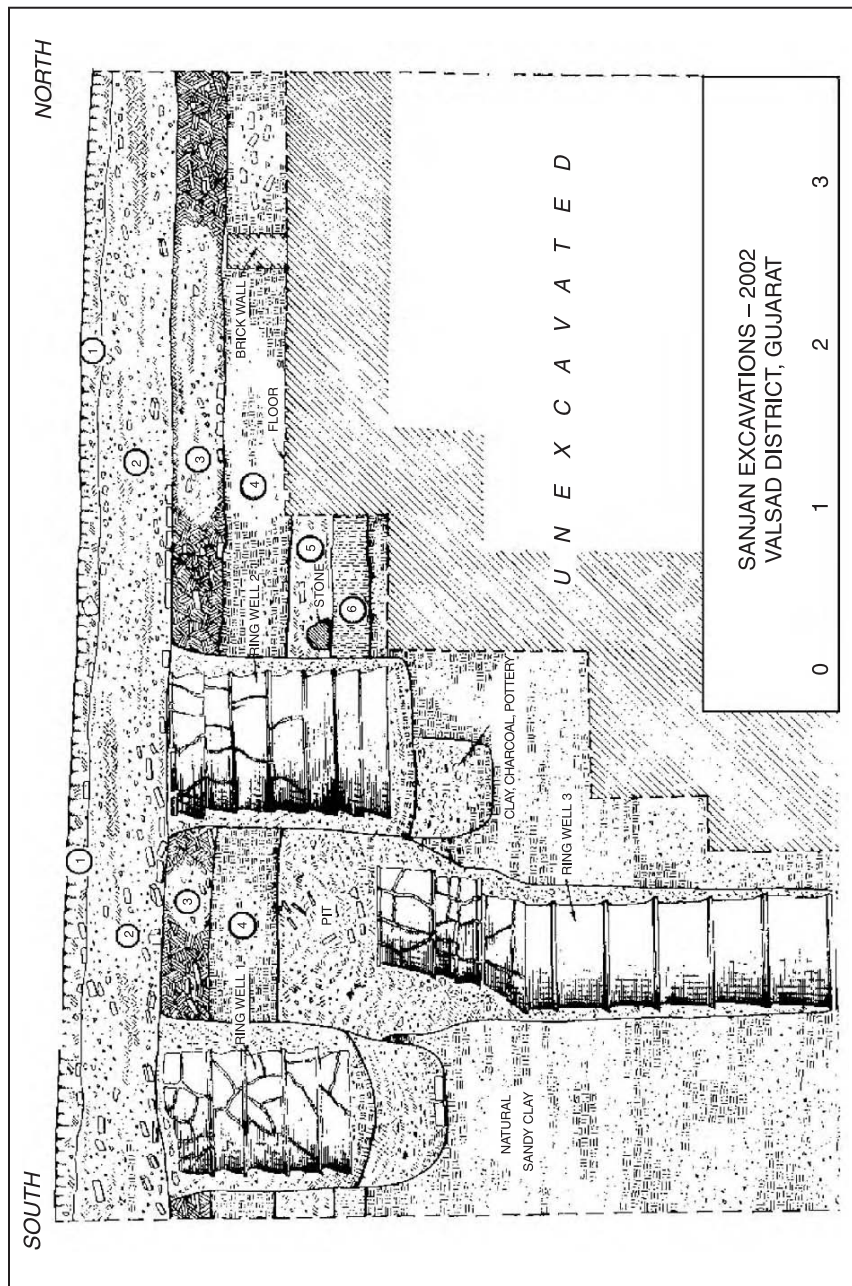


Figure 3.3 Sanjan: ringwells.

the *Koli Khadi* and the total absence of these at the *Bandar*/port in the excavations of 2002 (Joglekar 2003; unpublished report).

Section-scraping at the *Bandar*/port embankment of the Varoli during low water revealed large brick structures, walls and a small tank-like square feature which was at water level with the river. Large quantities of pottery were extracted from this feature before the rising water levels made it impossible to continue work. This pottery showed the same range of wares as that retrieved in 2002 – West Asian glazed wares and Chinese wares along with indigenous pottery (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 93–106).

Season 3 (2004): (Gupta *et al.* 2005: 55–61; also, Nanji and Dandekar 2005: 69–72; and Mushrif and Walimbe 2005: 73–92)

The excavations of the first two years established the contact of Sanjan with West Asia and Iran but did not provide any specifically Zoroastrian evidence to establish the ethnicity of the population. The other fact that required clarification was the stratigraphy and the chronology of the site. The disturbed nature of the settlement had made it difficult to obtain a clear stratigraphic profile. It was decided that the only ethno-centric, purely Zoroastrian evidence one could hope to procure at the site would be the *dokhma* or Tower of Silence, which is a unique mortuary structure exclusive to this community. Local legend has it that Sanjan originally had nine *dokhmas* (Menant 1917: 63), but so far only one is known. It has not been possible to identify the others despite extensive explorations.

The first phase of the third season of excavations concentrated on the excavation of the *dokhma*. This structure is located to the north-east of the *Bandar*/port site, on the periphery of the habitation and about 550 m from the *Koli Khadi* where the six skeletons had been found the previous year. This site had been identified and, since 1831, visited by numerous scholars such as Dr John Wilson (Menant 1917: 63), and had even been partially exposed by Dr Jivanjee Modi in the 1920s (Unvala 1951: II–IV and 9–13). The complex is situated on top of a high natural mound with the streams of *Koli Khadi* and *Tukkad-nallah* flowing past to a confluence with the Varoli on the north. The structure itself is extremely basic, consisting of an outer wall made of rubble, a parabolic mud-plastered floor (*pavis*) and a brick-lined central well or repository for osseous matter (the *Bhandar*) (Figure 3.4). The construction appears to have been effected by the simple technique of scooping out the top of the natural mound and forming a crater. The wall of the crater was riveted with brickbats and cobbles to reinforce it and to check erosion by the elements. An opening in the crater wall indicates the entrance which is due east. Brick facings on the interior surface of the wall indicate at least one phase of renovation (Nanji and Dandekar 2005: 69). The central well/*bhandar* has a diameter of 5 m. Large quantities of human remains were recovered from inside this repository.

THE LANDING AT SANJAN

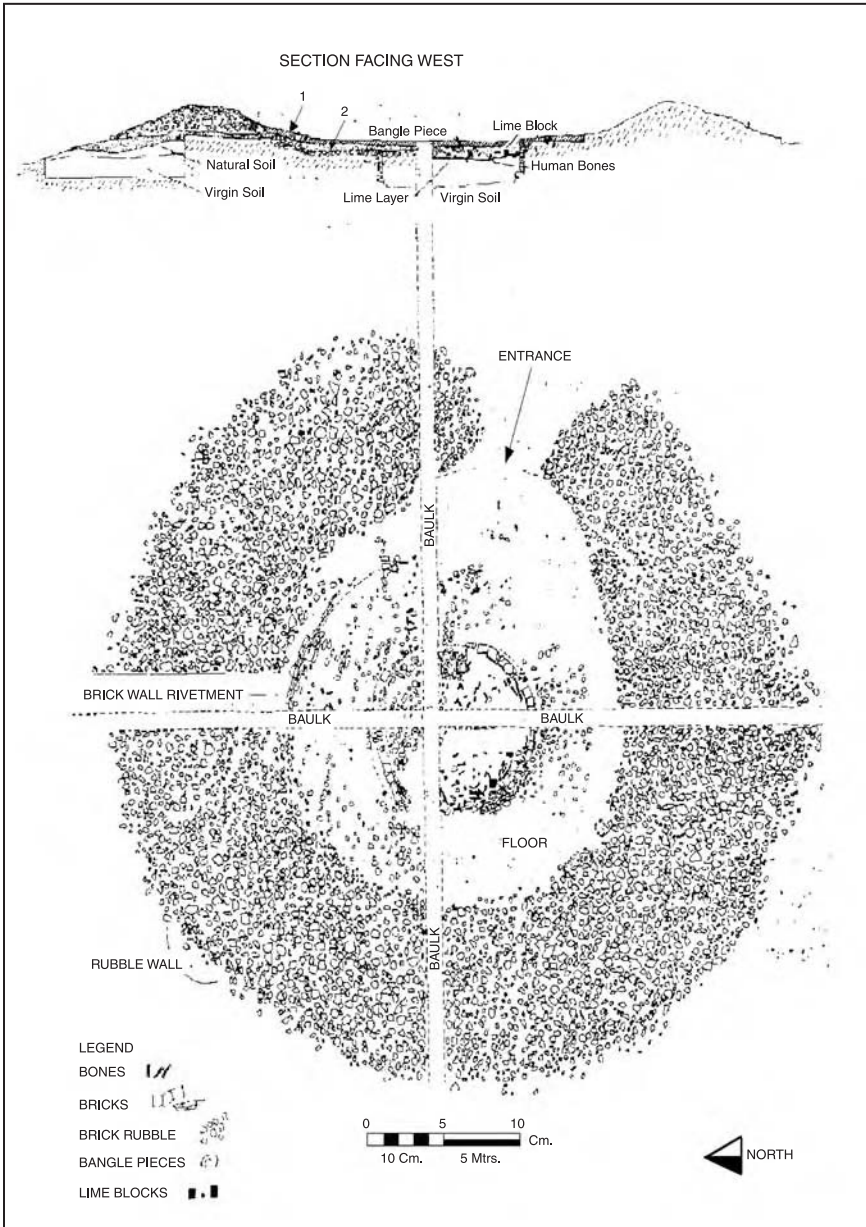


Figure 3.4 Sanjan: dokhma.

The excavations threw up many unexpected finds: the first was the presence of pottery sherds in the mud mortar which help in dating the structure (Nanji and Dandeker 2005: 69–72); second, the depth of the central well/*bhandar* was less than one meter, indicating the practice of regular removal and disposal of remains. The excavators had expected a far deeper feature since present *dokhmas* are not so shallow. The third unexpected find was the presence of a large number of rings (silver and mixed metal), bangles, some beads and a gold-foil earring. Apparently, the present practice of divesting the deceased of all ornament has been adopted at a later date (Gupta *et al.* 2005: 55–61). Some of the bangles were found *in situ*, still on the bones of the forearms. Silver/mixed metal rings of the same kind as at the *dokhma* were found in the excavations in the habitation areas as well, providing a link between the settlement and the interred individuals (Gupta *et al.* 2005: 59). The human remains belong to all age groups, infant to adult, and both sexes. The bones are presently under study for pathology, dietary patterns, stature and morphology, demographic profiles, etc. Attempts are also being made to study the DNA and if possible to match it with the skeletal remains found at the *Koli Khadi*. This deposit indicates the terminal use of the *dokhma*. The bone samples have been tested for Accelerated Mass Spectroscopy (AMS) dates at Oxford University and the results narrow down the time bracket to 1410–1450 AC. It should be emphasized that this date does not apply to the structure or its construction but only to the last deposition of bones. The shallow central well/*bhandar* would have facilitated a regular removal and disposal of the bones (Dhalla and Nanji 2006). The ceramics found in the mortar of the building material indicate a date between the tenth and twelfth century for the construction itself.

A second excavation was undertaken on the river embankment of the *Bandar*/port to help establish a stratigraphy for the ceramic assemblage and to help build a cultural and chronological sequence. This small trench on the river-side yielded evidence of a brick platform, with a 6 m deep, brick-lined well next to it and an adjacent floor. An earlier phase of occupation was encountered in the north-east quadrant of the trench. This was represented by a brick wall at a depth of 2.02 m (Gupta *et al.* 2005: 55–61). As in the previous years, large quantities of ceramics both foreign and indigenous were retrieved. Botanical remains collected during the excavations reveal the presence of various grains (rice, wheat, lentils, hyacinth beans, gram, ber or Indian berries) and provide an insight into the dietary habits of the population (Gupta *et al.* 2005: 60; and Dr M. D. Kajale, personal communication). Five layers made up the stratigraphy at this location.³

Antiquities, coins and pottery

The finds from the three seasons of excavations are presented here in brief (Gupta *et al.* 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005).

A rich collection of antiquities, indicative of the lifestyle, economy and cultural ethos of the period, provides an insight into the everyday usages and practices of the Sanjan population. These include large numbers of beads of different types made of various materials such as glass, stone, terracotta, etc. The presence of glass eye-beads from West Asia and segmented beads from the Red Sea region are noteworthy. Mesopotamian glass, datable to the ninth to tenth centuries, is also present. Large quantities of glass fragments of bottles, vials, bowls and other vessel forms have been found (Mitra and Dalal 2005: 62–8). Metal objects of iron and copper make up a large part of the finds, namely nails, rods, spikes, knives, points, ladles, antimony rods, etc.

A large quantity of coins was retrieved in the three years of excavations. While a number of them are too badly effaced to be decipherable, some of the coins are of great relevance.⁴ The coins of the first season are relevant in that they provide a time bracket from the second century to approximately 1030 AC (Gokhale 2004: 107). One small silver issue, with an elephant motif on the obverse and a lion on the reverse, has been dated by Gokhale to the second century AC on the basis of both the stylistic features as well as corroboration with the Satavahana brick sizes that were associated with this find. This date is certainly plausible, but it may have to be revised if the brick sizes are found to vary. Yet another coin, with a Brahmi legend on one face and an elephant on the other, has been attributed to the eighth or ninth century and may well be a Rashtrakuta coin or a coin minted on the authority of the state (Gokhale 2004: 109). One fragment of a Sasanian or Abbasid-Sasanian coin with a partial legend and fire altar has also been retrieved. Indo-Sasanian coins, locally known as *Gadheya*, form a notable part of the numismatic collection. These issues are commonly found in Gujarat and Saurashtra and are datable from the eighth to the eleventh centuries AC. Some Islamic coins also form part of the collection, notably one of the Sultan of Sind, dated to the early tenth century AC. In the second season of excavations, a coin of Ala'oddin Khilji (1296–1316) was found on the surface at the *Koli Khadi* site (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 99). Coins found in the third season are currently under study.

One of the most important finds at Sanjan has been the discovery of West Asian and Far Eastern pottery in large quantities. It is the subject of the first author's research upon which the following discussion is based. This pottery is not only crucial in establishing a chronological model for the site, but also provides invaluable data on the role of Sanjan in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean. The collection can be divided into three main categories: Far Eastern wares, West Asian wares and indigenous wares. The range of ware classes and subclasses is large and impossible to discuss here in full. Some of the more important wares, relevant to this chapter, are described below in brief.

In the category of the Far Eastern wares, the important classes found at the site are as follows. Changsha Underglaze-painted Stoneware was an

important export from the kilns of Hunan in South China to the early Islamic world. This ware is an important chronological marker at various sites in the Persian Gulf region and the Middle East since its production began in the middle T'ang period and ended in the late T'ang and Five Dynasties period. These sherds have been reported from Siraf (Whitehouse and Williamson 1973: 29–49; also Tampoe 1989: 54–7), Suhar (Kevran 2004: 318–19), Ras al-Khaimah (Kennet 2004: 46) and various other sites where they are dated to the early and mid-ninth century. The Belitung shipwreck is one of the most spectacular finds in recent years, with almost sixty thousand pieces of this ware (Guy 2001: 13–27). At Sanjan the ware is represented by one sherd but it comes from a stratigraphic context and helps provide a relative date, corroborating associated material.

Another stoneware type which is frequently found associated with Changsha wares, but which is more abundant and with a longer production history, is Dusun, a thick-walled, green-glazed stoneware used for transportation and storage vessels. These large jars, sometimes with small handles attached to them, are found at almost all early medieval trading sites in the Indian Ocean. At sites in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, they are usually datable to the eighth or ninth century, but some types could continue until as late as the twelfth century. Yeu Ware or pre-celadon bowls with spur marks prominently seen on the interiors, green-glazed stonewares, Celadon, White Porcelain, Cream Porcelain, Qing bai and Longquan are some of the other wares from China and the Far East represented in the collection. They are all datable to the early and middle Islamic periods. The West Asian wares are in considerably greater quantities and indicate a more sustained and intense contact between the two regions. They provide important information in the building of the chronology as well as an insight into the nature of the economy, sustained cultural contacts and material culture of the inhabitants at Sanjan. Some of the more important wares found during the excavations are mentioned here in brief. Turquoise Glazed Ware is one of the most abundant of the glazed wares found at Sanjan. This is a ware with a long history, stretching from the Parthian and Sasanian times to the Islamic. The body of these vessels is made of yellowish buff soft-paste clay overlaid with a blue-green glaze with at least six variations in the color tones that have been noted at Sanjan. The shapes are usually large jars and storage vessels, vases and occasionally bowls and smaller forms. They can be highly decorated with designs that are incised, appliquéd, stamped or applied, sometimes with all these techniques used on the same vessel (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 102, Figure 11). These wares are reported from almost all sites in the Indian Ocean littoral and are markers of Persian-Arab commercial presence. At Sanjan, the late Sasanian–early Islamic types have been found at the lowest levels of the excavations in season 3. In the subsequent levels the more developed and ornate varieties are found. (Figure 3.5 illustrates the samples from season 1.)

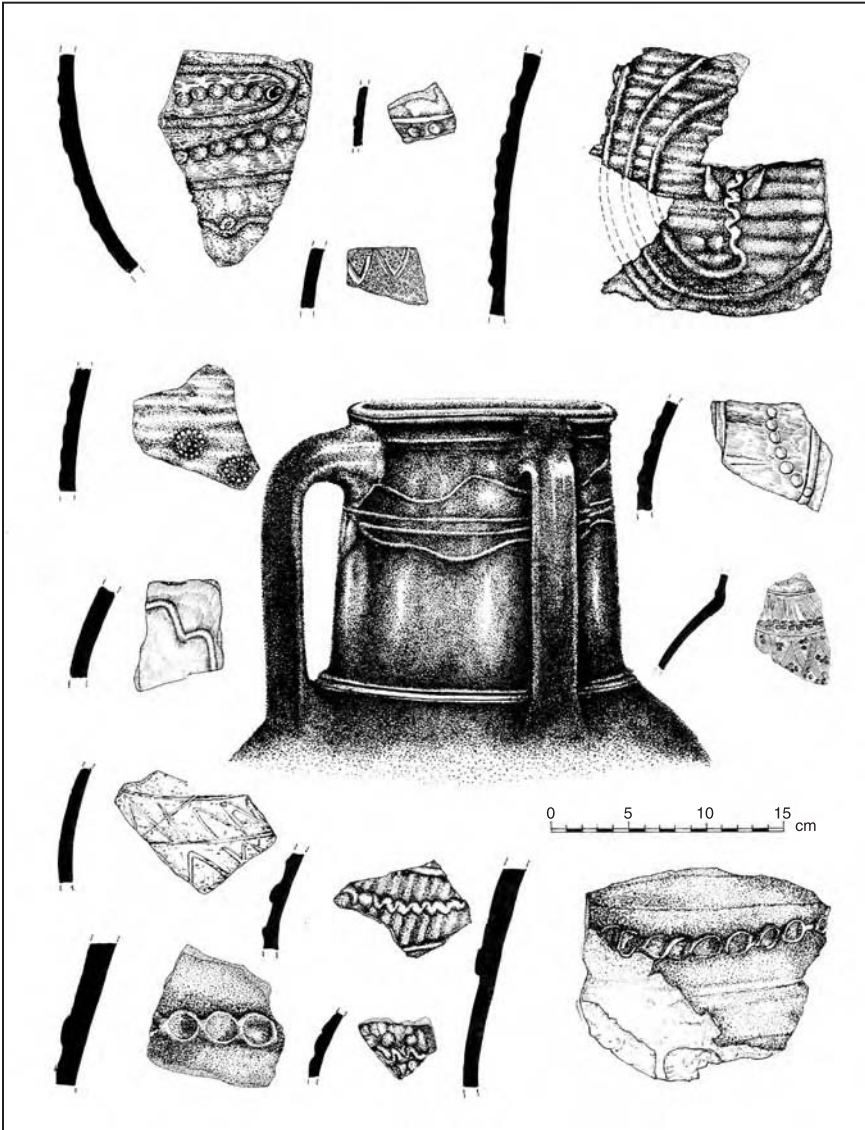


Figure 3.5 Sanjan: Turquoise Glazed Ware.

A group of wares which have an early date of the eighth or ninth century and which belong to the so-called Samarra Horizon are well represented at Sanjan.⁵ This group consists of White Glazed Ware, Cobalt Splashed Ware, Cobalt Painted Ware, Polychrome Splashed Ware, Lustre Painted Ware and Eggshell Ware (Figures 3.6–3.8).

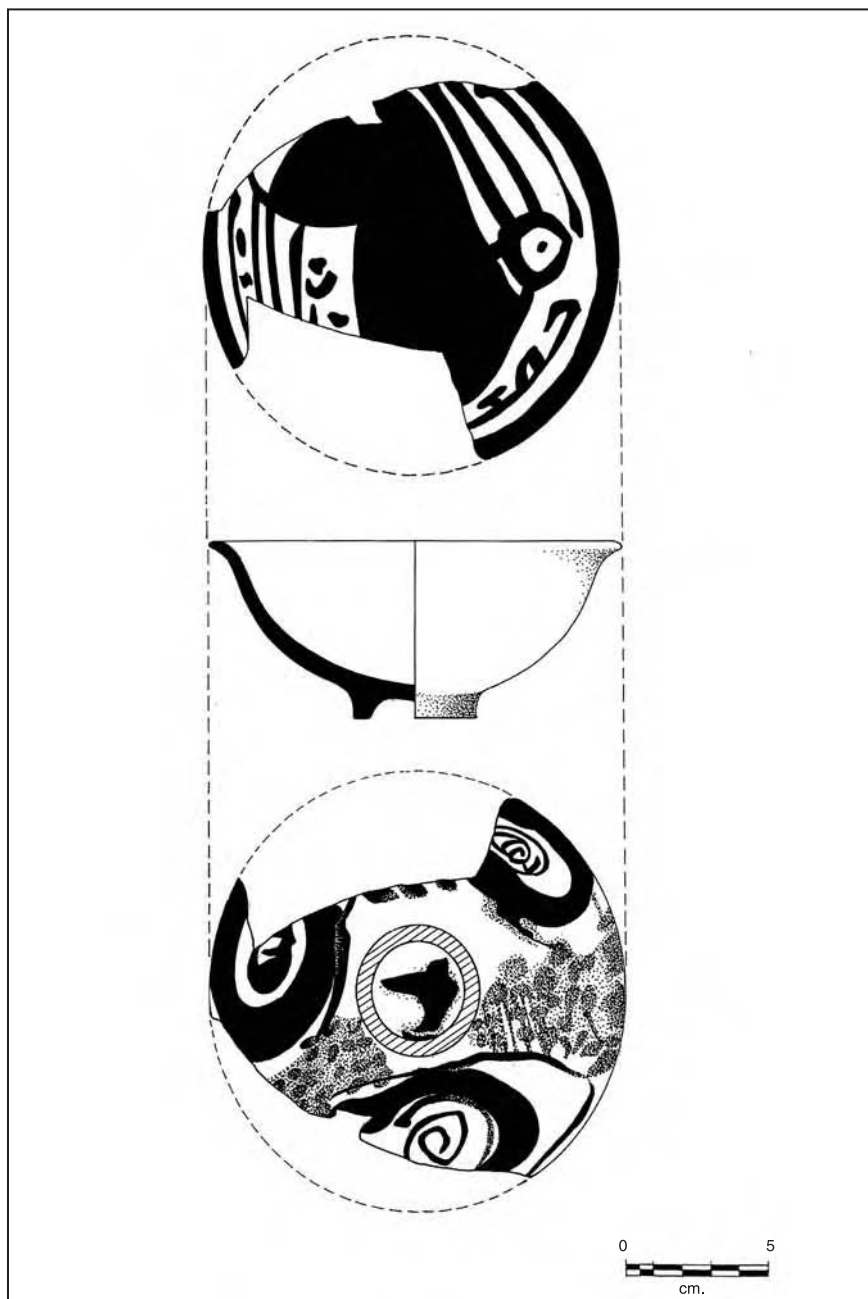


Figure 3.6 Sanjan: Lustre Painted Ware.

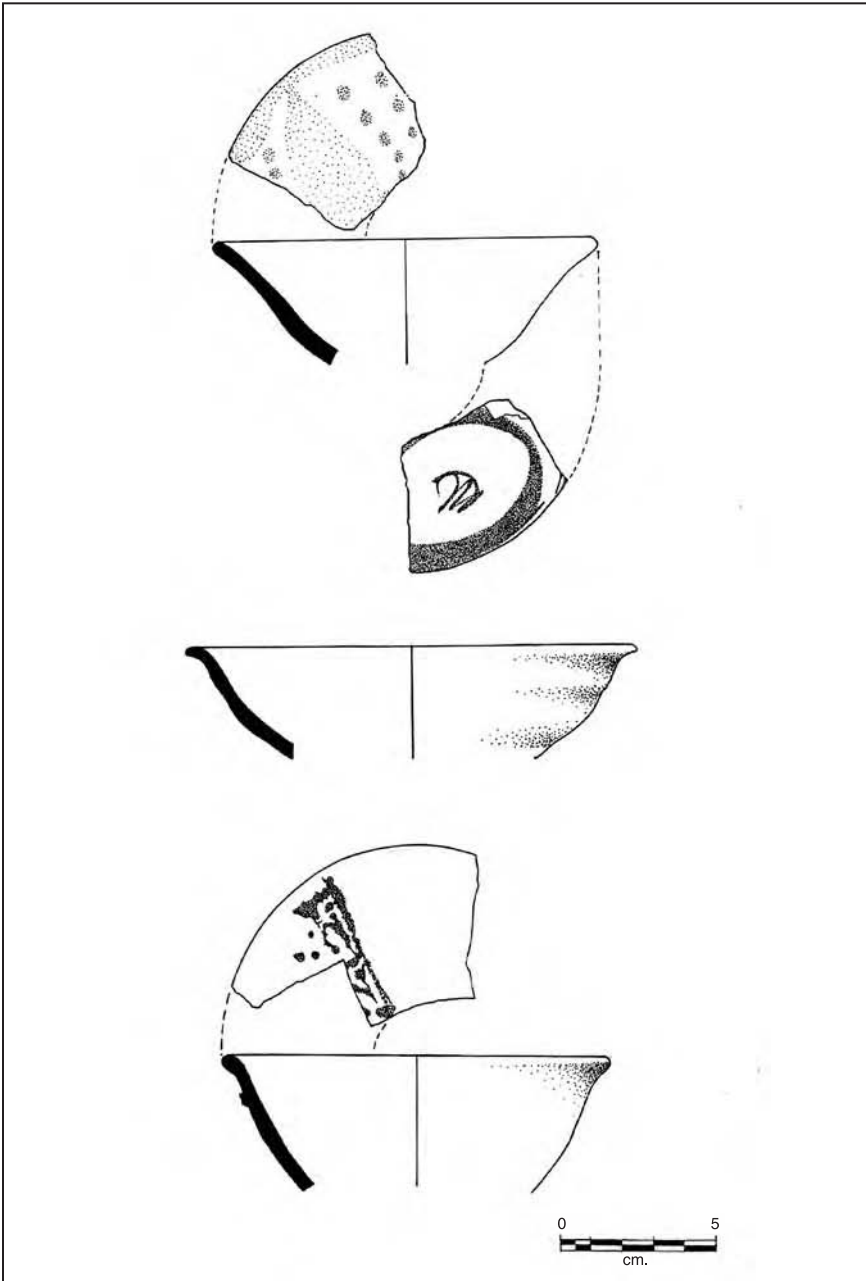


Figure 3.7 Sanjan: Lustre Painted Ware (top) and Cobalt Painted Ware (bottom).

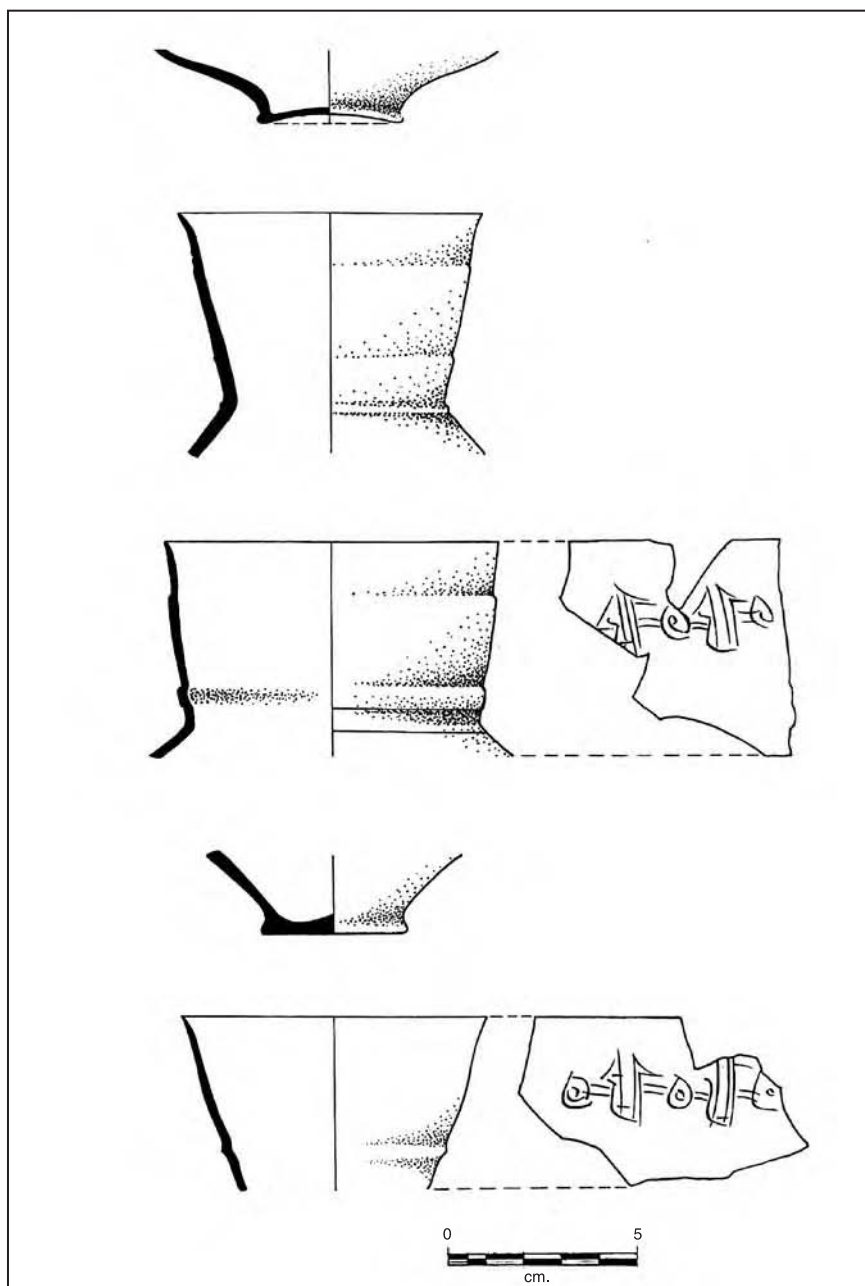


Figure 3.8 Sanjan: Eggshell Ware.

These early wares are very prominent in the assemblage and most can be securely dated to the early ninth to the tenth centuries. Lustre Painted Ware is an expensive elite ware which requires two firings and which has decoration in gold or silver oxide on a white background (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 106). A group of four lustre painted bowls has been retrieved and pieced together over the three seasons of work at Sanjan. This unique set has the same running hare motif on the interior (Figure 3.6). The presence of such wares is indicative of a wealthy clientele which could well afford expensive goods.

Different types of Sgraffiato wares, from the early champlévé to the later hatched types, mark the eleventh and twelfth century layers at the site. The shapes are almost all bowls and dishes with fine, incised designs on the interior. The clay body is pink and has a white slip or engobe. Fine, incised designs, sometimes reminiscent of the Persian metal wares, are executed so that the clay body shows through the white slip. There are splashes of green, yellow and brown on the surface and a translucent glaze is then applied. In the case of Hatched Sgraffiato, the background of the motif or design is filled with fine, hatched lines so as to bring the main motif into relief (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 106). Interestingly, a large number of these bowls and dishes have mending marks along the old fracture lines, indicating that the vessel was not discarded after breakage but was sewn and preserved. A large number of unglazed wares from the Persian Gulf, such as amphorae, storage vessels and torpedo jars, some still containing the residue of the contents, are evidence of a port-site where goods were unloaded and loaded for maritime trade.

The local or indigenous wares are unglazed and mostly utilitarian, such as cooking pots, storage vessels, lids, dough plates, etc. These are mostly red or grey wares, with or without surface treatment. One relevant piece of evidence for an early settlement at Sanjan, possibly in the vicinity of the *Bandar* site, is the presence of Red Polished Ware sherds, datable to the second or third century AC.

Discussion

Historical evidence for the chronology at Sanjan comes from the following sources:

- 1 Literary sources (*Qesse-ye Sanjan*)
- 2 Epigraphic records (inscriptions, copper-plate grants, etc.)
- 3 Epistolary data (*Revayats*)
- 4 Accounts by travelers, mariners and merchants

These sources can now be verified against the archaeological evidence available to us.

Alan Williams discusses the *Qesse-ye Sanjan* and its varied facets elsewhere in this volume. We, therefore, restrict ourselves to briefly discussing historical

and archaeologically verifiable data provided by the text. The first references to Sanjan in the *Qesse* are about the landing and the meeting of the Dastur with Jadi Rana, the king of Sanjan. The Sanjan *Bandar*, as mentioned earlier, would have been an ideal safe anchorage for a ship or ships seeking refuge from a storm. It would not have been possible for ships to have sailed inland past this site due to the rock outcrops in the riverbed. It is most likely then, that the *Bandar* was the actual landing spot. The excavations did not provide any clues as to the actual identity of the king or the ruling dynasty. Present-day activity at the site also made it impossible to locate the *Atash Behram* that the *Qesse* mentions as being built by the migrants.⁶ However the brick and mud mortar construction of the *dokhma* and the ceramic debris are evidence of a considerable Zoroastrian presence. The tenth- to eleventh-century date for the structure makes it the earliest Zoroastrian structure on Indian soil. The text mentions the movement of the Zoroastrians to other places. It is significant that the movements are to coastal towns and port sites, especially along the Gujarat coast. Had they been predominantly agriculturists, it is logical to suppose that they would have chosen to move into the more fertile plains of the hinterland. That the migrant community was engaged in trade is borne out by the trade ceramics, glass, beads, etc. While there is no doubt that there would have been people of all trades and professions, the mainstay of the group does not appear to have been agriculture. The *Qesse* does not record any other migrations from Iran to Sanjan but there is every likelihood that there may have been several such subsequent migrations after the settlement was established and that the numbers of Zoroastrians grew large enough to necessitate the construction of structures such as the *dokhma*. The *Qesse* goes on to describe the invasion of the settlement by Sultan Mahmud and its abandonment after a fierce battle. There is no evidence about the identity of Sultan Mahmud in the excavations. The equation of this Muslim king with Mohammed Begada, the ruler of Champaner is not validated by the archaeological records, since the fifteenth-century date of his rule is not reflected in the dates of the settlement. No fifteenth-century levels can be seen in the trenches, nor are the diagnostic pottery types found. The attack on Sanjan appears to have taken place earlier, probably in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century. The battle may have taken place in the outlying areas of the settlement since the excavated trenches on the *Bandar* itself give no evidence of violence, nor do the human remains in the *dokhma* show any signs of a massacre. The site does show signs of abandonment.

The geo-morphological explorations in and around Sanjan indicate the siltation of the river and the shrinkage of the estuarine area due to the formation of a sand-bar at Nargol and fluctuating sea-levels (Rajaguru and Deo 2005: 96–7) This would have definitely affected the traffic of vessels approaching the harbor. In fact, boats cannot approach Sanjan Bandar today and are anchored on the southern bank due to the mangroves and mudflats. The ceramics at the site show a decline in the trading activities of the port

from the middle of the thirteenth century, if not a little earlier. Evidence for the occupation at the *Bandar* in the fourteenth century is meager. It may not, then, have been the invasion alone that was responsible for the abandonment of the town, as the *Qesse* states, but also the commercial decline that may have set in earlier for geological reasons. That everyone did not leave Sanjan, as mentioned in the *Qesse*, is evident from the continued use of the *dokhma* and the last deposition of bones which is datable to 1410–1450 AC. Farmsteads and homesteads in the peripheral areas would have continued to be occupied for a longer time than the urban, trade-dependent *Bandar*. Areas such as the *Koli Khadi* with fourteenth-century deposits are evidence of continued occupation. Recent explorations by the first author have also provided evidence of fourteenth-century occupations at Palgam, a short distance from Sanjan, on the southern bank of the Varoli. Presuming that some of the remnant population was definitely Zoroastrian, it may explain why the *Iranshah* was housed at Bahrot and not moved to a location further away. The residual population would have provided the support required for the tending priests and caretakers of the *Iranshah*, at least until it was feasible to continue residing in the region.

Epigraphic records such as the inscriptions of Buddhavarasa (671 AC), Amoghavarasa (871 AC), the Chinchani Copper Plates (926–1053 AC), etc. provide irrefutable evidence that Sanjan existed as far back as the seventh century, at the very least. An inscription that has not yet received attention in the study of the antiquity of Sanjan is the Nagarjunakonda inscription of Abhira Vasushena. This inscription dated by D.C. Sircar to 278 AC, mentions the grant made by a group called the *Yorajis* of Sanjayapura. Sircar equates *Yoraji* with *Yavannas* or the Indo-Greeks and Sanjayapura with Sanjan. If indeed this inscription records the presence of a non-Indian dynasty in Western India at this time, they could well have been subordinates of the Sakas of Western India (Sircar 1963b: 197–204). If this epigraphic record is viewed in the light of the archaeological evidence, we find that it is not improbable that the antiquity of Sanjan can indeed go back to the third century. The presence of ringwells, the sherds of Red Polished Ware and perhaps some of the early coins identified by Gokhale as being Satavahana issues lend credence to the fact that there was an old established settlement either at Sanjan or in its immediate vicinity prior to the migration. The newcomers may have established a satellite settlement or added to the growth of the old settlement in the later period. The inscriptions of Buddhavarasa establish the existence of the settlement by 671 AC as a definite fact (Konow 1982: 144–52). Amoghavarasa's inscription mentions the settlement in 871 AC and refers to it as a group of 24 villages (Bhandarkar, *EI* XVIII).

The Chinchani copper plates, datable to the early tenth century, mention the appointment of Muhammed Sugatipa (Sanskrit – ‘Madhumati’), a Tajik, as governor of ‘Sanyanapattana’ (Sanjan port) by the Rashtrakuta king from 878 to 915 AC (Sircar 1962). Another grant in the same set speaks of the

'Hamjamana paura' or the *anjuman* or community. This fact is relevant in that it mentions a Muslim administrator controlling the region during the late ninth and early tenth century, which many scholars believe is the date of the migration. It is doubtful if a group of migrants fleeing Muslim persecution in their home country would seek refuge thousands of miles away in an area governed by a Muslim (Dhalla and Nanji 2006). It is more likely that the migrants were well settled and established locally by the time Muhammed Sugatipa became the governor of Sanjan, i.e. before the late ninth to early tenth centuries. His benevolence to all communities is attested to in the inscription and there seems to have been no reason for the Zoroastrians to have fled Sanjan. The inscriptions mention the various communities residing in Sanjan and the cosmopolitan character of the town. Other grants in the same set mention the areas that were included in Sanjan territory. It appears that by 1053 AC Sanjanpattana extended up to Agashi near Virar and consisted of 700 villages. Much work, both exploration and excavation, needs to be done in this region to ascertain the actual territorial extent of Sanjan. The inscriptional evidence is borne out by the archaeological data since the ceramics certainly provide corroborative dates for the settlement.

Sanjan finds mention as Sindan in various accounts of Arab and Persian mariners and travelers. Mas'udi notes in 915 AC that the town is prosperous, large and strong. Interestingly, it is noted that one of the chief exports from Sindan is a good-quality emerald, also known as the Mecca stone (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* XIV 1882). At about the same time in the tenth century, Buzurg-e-Shahiyar Al-Ram-Hurmuzi, a Persian who compiled stories collected from sailors and mariners on the waterfronts of Siraf, Basra and Oman, narrates a story in his book *'Aja'ib al-Hind* about a voyage from Siraf to Saymur (present-day Chaul, south of Mumbai) via Sindan (Hourani 1952: 118–20). Al-Istakhri (950 AC) and Al-Idrisi (1130 AC) also mention the port of Sindan and give its location in relation to other ports on the west coast, calculating distances in terms of the number of days it takes to sail between the ports. Ibn Hawqal writes in 950 AC about the thriving export and import activity at Sindan and the large Jama Mosque (Janaki 1969: 57–8). While bamboo, leather goods, timber, etc. are mentioned in other sources as exports from Sanjan, we find specific mention of indigo as one of the important trade items in an unexpected source, namely the Geniza documents (Stillman 1973: 15–88). The Geniza documents pertaining to the Jewish business house of Ibn Awkal (980–1030 AC) mention the items of trade going from India to Egypt. Three varieties of indigo appear to be traded, one of which is Sindani indigo or indigo from Sindan (Sanjan).

That Sanjan had a large and cosmopolitan population is mentioned in the accounts of travelers as well as the Indian inscriptions and grants mentioned above. While the local tribal population consisted largely of Kolis and Mahars, the inscriptions list Muslims and Arabs, Panchagaudiya Brahmins, Modha Baniyas and Zoroastrians (Sankalia 1983: 210). The sea routes to India and

China were well known to the Persians and Arabs from very early times. The Parthian and Sasanian contact with India and Gujarat in particular is also historically known and well documented. Hence a trading outpost with a community of foreign settlers, both Arab and Persian, at Sanjan is not unexpected. Such a trading outpost may well have existed prior to the migration, as is indicated by the presence of early ceramic types in the lowest levels of the excavations. The migrants may well have been aware of this settlement and may have made a conscious decision to migrate to Sanjan. During the nineteen-year stay at Diu, it is logical to suppose that they had contact with the mainland and would therefore have taken an informed decision to relocate themselves at the most hospitable and suitable point on the west coast. The idea that a ship-load of migrants buffeted by the winds was tossed ashore at Sanjan by sheer chance needs to be recognized as a myth. From the tenth century onwards Bharuch, Khambhat and Chaul were known to have similar communities of Arab and Persian Zoroastrian traders.⁷ Communities of these traders had settled on foreign shores as far as China and often their numbers were not negligible.⁸ That the Zoroastrian migrants to Sanjan were basically a mercantile group is borne out by records as well as by excavated material. Andre Wink goes further and adds that the migration was not so much due to religious persecution as much as 'a readjustment of commercial patterns which had arisen long before Islam, and, to an extent at least, a response to new opportunities in the transit trade between the Islamic world and *al-Hind*' (Wink 2002: 105).

The ceramic record certainly reflects a limited West Asian contact in the lowest levels which could be dated to the seventh–eighth century. There is a tremendous increase in the volume and range of traded ceramics from the eighth and ninth century onwards with the most prosperous phase extending up to the mid-thirteenth century. The arrival of the migrants to the Sanjan port would have been the impetus for the increased trade in the eighth and early ninth centuries. Considering the commercial traffic between the two regions, it is more than likely that many subsequent migrations could have taken place and the population could have grown from these new arrivals. The decline of the port in the thirteenth century may have been due to various factors, as discussed before – geological, commercial, military and political reasons may have all been responsible for the populations moving away. It is also possible that political events in Iran and the Persian Gulf region could have caused disruption of trade and trading activities and the movement of goods to foreign ports. The Mongol invasion did in fact cause the disruption of the political, social and cultural order of the Caliphate until the invaders themselves were assimilated into mainstream life.

The *Revayats* or correspondence between the Zoroastrian communities of India and Iran, do not mention Sanjan at all (Dhabhar 1932). The earliest known *Revayat* is datable to 1478, by which time Sanjan had probably lost significance and the *Iranshah* was already enthroned elsewhere. It is by omission that the *Revayats* provide evidence for the terminal dates for Sanjan.

Chronology

A tentative chronology that the ceramics, absolute dates and related finds suggest is

- 1 a pre-Islamic phase which may coincide with the terminal Sasanian period, the evidence for which is provided by the inscription of Budhavarasa, the unglazed West Asian pottery and the Sasanian–Islamic early type of Turquoise Glazed Ware from the lowest occupation levels. The most plausible dates for this level would be mid- to late seventh century extending up to the mid- to late eighth century.
- 2 a middle phase which appears to be the most prosperous and intense phase of occupation – spanning the early to mid-eighth century and extending up to the end of the thirteenth century. The earlier part of this phase is marked by the Samarra Horizon wares, Turquoise Glazed Ware, unglazed West Asian wares with residue, Chinese wares such as Changsha, Yeu, Dusun and Cream and white porcelains, etc., all belonging to a period extending from the late eighth and early ninth century to the early eleventh century. The later part of this phase extends up to the middle thirteenth century and is marked by the more developed forms of Turquoise Glazed Ware, Sgraffiato wares, etc. These layers have yielded two Radio Carbon dates, 830 AC and 1210 AC. Inscriptions such as those of Amoghavarasa (871 AC), the Chinchani copper plates (926–1053 AC), accounts of Arab and Persian travelers, etc. corroborate these dates. The most intense construction activities at Sanjan appear to belong to this phase. The Zoroastrian migration appears to have taken place at the start of this phase and may well have provided the impetus for the increased commercial activity at the site and for the economic growth of the settlement.
- 3 a short-lived late phase belonging to the fourteenth century, perhaps in peripheral areas of the settlement – the *Koli Khadi* excavations have yielded this evidence as has some of the fourteenth century pottery from the *dokhma*. The continued use of the *dokhma* until 1410–1450, as ascertained by the AMS dates, corroborate this.
- 4 a residual occupation in surrounding regions which ends in the mid-fifteenth century – as the explorations at Palgam have revealed.

It would be pertinent here to note the dates revealed by the Abhira Vasushena inscription of Nagarjunakonda (278 AC) and the Red Polished Ware sherds found in season 1. Coupled with the presence of ringwells and possible Satavahana coins, it is likely that the antiquity of the site itself can be pushed back to the early centuries of the Christian era. No such clearly marked horizons of early occupation are seen in the trenches. But that may well be due to the fact that settlements, especially those of the early historical and early

medieval periods, are usually staggered, covering a large horizontal area. They do not always occur in a sandwich-formation stratigraphy in excavated trenches. Given that the area excavated at Sanjan is severely restricted and the excavations have been more or less of a vertical nature, it is not surprising that an early historical level is not seen as a clear strata.

The final report of the Sanjan excavations is being readied for publication. Some of the conclusions arrived at in this essay may be modified with new information at a later date.

Notes

* This chapter provides a brief review of the archaeological excavations carried out by the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation from 2002 to 2004 at the ancient site of Sanjan, Gujarat and draws on the research undertaken by the first author towards her doctoral thesis, entitled 'The study of Early Medieval Ceramics in India with special reference to Sanjan (Gujarat)'. The second author is the Principal of the project and Founder-President of the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation, Mumbai. The Director of the excavations is Dr S. P. Gupta, Chairman, Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, and co-director is Dr Kurush Dalal. The project has been funded by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Dorab Tata Trust. All excavation data mentioned in this chapter is based on published Preliminary reports. The ceramic data, interpretations and conclusions presented here are entirely based on the first author's doctoral thesis which is in the process of being submitted to Deccan College, Deemed University, Pune, India, and on historical data researched by both authors.

We remember with gratitude and affection the support and contribution of Late Dr Mani Kamerkar who was a principal of the project.

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- 1 This refers to the popular story (which is *not* in the *Qesse-ye Sanjan*) that, when the Parsis first landed on the coast of India, their leader explained to the Indian raja, Jadi Rana, that they would bring no harm, nor displace anyone in India; he asked for a bowl of milk to be brought, into which he put some sugar, demonstrating that the addition of sugar only sweetened the milk, but did not cause the milk to overflow the bowl.
- 2 Ringwells are features denoting either a drainage system or freshwater wells. They consist of large terracotta rings fitted vertically one into the other, sunk deep into the ground. When used for drainage, as at Sanjan, they usually have potsherds, charcoal and sand at the base to act as filters. The freshwater wells do not have this filtration system but are found to extend down to the water-table, as the ones found at Chaul. Ringwells usually denote a more sophisticated system for waste disposal than that found at rural settlements.

- 3 Two of the five habitation layers have provided Radio Carbon dates. Layers 2 and 4 have yielded the dates 830 AC and 1210 AC. Since there are occupation levels preceding and succeeding these layers, these dates may be considered the middle phase of occupation at Sanjan.
- 4 The coins of the first excavation season have been studied and published (see Gokhale 2004: 107–12). The coins of the second and third season are still under study.
- 5 The Samarra Horizon refers to the ceramic profile and the chronological sequence forwarded by Friedrich Sarre and the debate about the introduction of certain ware types and glazes to the corpus of Islamic pottery. Sarre was of the opinion that the import of Chinese Polychrome Splashed wares or T'ang wares inspired Islamic potters to experiment with lead and tin glazes and attempts to decorate them using techniques such as splashing, underglaze painting, etc. Some forms such as the bowls with flaring rims are also supposed to be inspired by Chinese shapes. He based his model on the occurrence of pottery at the site of Samarra which was occupied by the Abbasid Caliphate between 838 and 895 AC (see Northedge and Kennet 1994; Northedge 1996). The debate has raged since his report in 1925 and has been revised with more recent discoveries and excavations. However, the wares in this class are undoubtedly bracketed between the early ninth and mid-tenth century.
- 6 A Government inspection bungalow at the start of the *Bandar* road has a large dressed block of stone lying by its side. Locally, this plot of land is called the *Agiari no khado* or the spot where once the *Agiari* stood. However, there is no evidence to support this belief.
- 7 D. C. Sircar recounts a story by Mohammed 'Awfi in his commentary on the Veraval inscription of Vaghela Arjuna, 1264 AC. He mentions that at the time of Jaisingh's rule (Jaysimha Siddharaja 1094–1144 AC) an incident took place in Khambat where a mosque and minaret were destroyed by Parsi and Hindu residents and some Muslims were killed (Sircar 1963a :146).
- 8 The Persian and Arab presence in Canton was so prominent that when Sulayman the Arab merchant wrote *Silsila al-Tawarikh* (The Chains of History) in 851 AC, he mentions a census taken by the Chinese government which accounted for 120,000 Muslims, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians in Canton alone (see Zhang Jun-Yan 1983: 91–109).

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PARSI PRAYER AND DEVOTIONAL SONG IN THE INDIAN DIASPORA

Sarah Stewart

Introduction

Though the oral composition and early transmission of the Zoroastrian scriptures have been subjects of discussion within Zoroastrian studies in recent years, there is little information about how such texts might have been understood by Zoroastrians themselves through the ages, and scant attention has been paid to this issue with respect to the living faith. The aim of this essay is to develop a line of enquiry which draws both on the Zoroastrian textual tradition and contemporary devotional life in the Indian diaspora. Two genres of texts will be considered here, both of which bear the hallmarks of having once been, either wholly or in part, in oral transmission: the first consists of the central prayers of Zoroastrianism that many Parsis recite today; the second is that of the devotional song, in particular a unique and remarkable song, the *Atash nu Git* or ‘Song of the Fire’. A version of this text formed the subject of a previous article of mine (Stewart 2004). Since that time other versions have been examined that shed new light on the way in which oral texts are compiled, how they operate in the tradition, and their significance in Parsi devotional life.

The relationship between the two genres of texts is not immediately obvious; the *Atash nu Git* is a Parsi *garba* (song accompanied by dance), which is a modern text (1765). It was composed by laymen, and belongs to what we would term popular culture. It also refers to a particular historic event and is peculiar to a locality. In contrast, the prayers are ancient, or are at least derived from ancient texts. They were undoubtedly composed by priests, and form part of the scriptural tradition that belongs to the community as whole. It was not until a recent survey of contemporary attitudes to Parsi devotional life in Bombay and Gujarat was undertaken between 1994 and 2000 that commonalities between the two genres of text began to emerge (Kreyenbroek 2001).

Parsis today will agree that there is a gap between contemporary religious practice and the textual tradition. The various interpretations of the religion that have emerged within the community in the past 200 years are an indication that they have long been wrestling with this anomaly. With regard to prayer, there seems to be little or no connection between the content of the prayer and the act of praying, and Parsis in India often say that the words have no resonance for them. Study of the *Atash nu Git* in depth has afforded a better understanding of the ritual nature of oral texts and their meaning, as acts of worship, for those who perform them. In a sense, the Gujarati song can be used as a means to understand how the ancient prayers work and how meaning is conveyed to the worshipper beyond the literal meaning of the words. The reason why the song became so popular may be that, at the time of its purported composition in 1765, it referred to events within living memory. Its subsequent evolution over the next 200 years, in keeping with its character as an oral text, reflected the transition from rural Gujarat to industrialised Bombay and the changes in society which accompanied that transition. The song thus became a symbol of identity for the Parsis of Navsari and Bombay at an important point in their respective histories.

Before looking at the texts of the prayers and devotional songs something should be said about my terms of reference. Parsi religious life today embraces a wide range of views and beliefs, and many observances are now no more than a recollection of customs that people remember as having taken place in the homes of their parents or grandparents. In this essay the focus is the prayers and songs which have become part of tradition, which continue largely in oral transmission, and which are in harmony with authoritatively established convention based upon religious texts.

The views cited here are drawn largely from a collection of interviews contained in *Living Zoroastrianism* (Kreyenbroek 2001). A number of these were undertaken by the late Mrs Shehnaz Munshi and me, and there are a great many that remain unpublished. Mrs Munshi had an encyclopedic knowledge of lay devotional life and came from a religious background which, according to Kreyenbroek's classificatory system, would be termed both traditionalist and neo-traditionalist (Kreyenbroek 2001: 47).

Prayer

Content

Zoroastrian prayers can broadly be divided into three categories. The first comprises those which are celebratory in nature and which bring together certain doctrinal teachings, such as the link between fire and the Avestan principle of *asha* or Truth, that are kept alive in the minds of those who recite the prayer to fire, the *Atash Nyayesh*. Celebratory observances include those made on the various *parabs*, 'name-day feasts', so-called when the day and

the month dedicated to a particular *yazata* (minor deity/divinity) coincide. On these days, special prayers are recited and accompanied by rituals. The second category comprises prayers that accompany apotropaic observances, that is, those performed to ward off destructive forces of evil. The battle against Ahriman, the spirit of evil, is both a cosmic and a practical one which affects all areas of daily life: it is the responsibility of each Zoroastrian to defend the material world against Ahriman's violation, through his or her adherence to the purity laws, and also through prayer and ritual action. The third category comprises the prayers that accompany observances surrounding rites of passage. These often include both the celebratory and apotropaic prayers (Munshi and Stewart 2002: 386–95). Certain prayers which are used for particular occasions also form part of the *farziat* or obligatory prayers that should be recited five times in the 24 hours.

Prayer and ritual action: the Kemna Mazda and kusti prayers

In Zoroastrian worship, as it is performed today, prayers are usually accompanied by devotional acts. The *farziat* or obligatory prayers include the *kusti* ritual, which entails the tying and untying of the sacred *kusti* cord, accompanied by the *Kemna Mazda* prayer, the *Ohrmazd Khoday*, and other short prayers. The purpose of the prayer is to protect the worshipper from the powers of evil while he or she is temporarily without the protection of the *kusti*. Use of this prayer and the sacred cord can be traced back through the religious literature to ancient times.¹ According to the ninth-century Pahlavi texts, the wearing of the *kusti* formed part of the initiation to the faith when a child was invested with it for the first time,² and this ceremony was said to continue an ancient custom.³ It was also worn as a protection against evil.⁴

The *kusti* is untied whilst reciting the *Kemna Mazda* prayer, which makes clear the intention to protect. It begins with passages from the prophet Zarathushtra's own hymns, the *Gathas* (Y.46.7; 44.16), followed by a passage from the *Vendidad* that is clearly directed towards the banishment of the evil beings or *daevas* (Vd.8.21) and ends with another Gathic verse (Y.49.10). The imagery of these verses is unmistakably dualistic, in the sense of there being a clear division between good and evil, with striking contrast between the souls of the righteous and the *daevic drug*. The prayer also refers to three out of the six *Amesha Spentas* or Holy Immortals: Vohu Manah or 'Good Thought', Spenta Armaiti or 'Holy Devotion', Asha Vahishta or 'Best Truth' who are in opposition to three personifications of evil, the one of *daeva*-origin, the one of *daeva*-shaping and the one of *daeva*-begetting. The *kusti* is retied while reciting the Pahlavi prayer, the *Ohrmazd Khoday*, which condemns the *daevas* in the same way as the older Avestan prayer.

The ritual action accompanying the prayer underpins the need for real rather than symbolic protection. For example, when repeating the short formula that precedes the first *kusti* ritual of the day, '*shekaste, shekaste*

shaytan’, ‘defeated, defeated is Satan’, many people when reciting the prayer today take the end of the *kusti* and give it three sharp flicks, thus emphasising the words with this action.

The potency of prayer: four short prayers

In Zoroastrian worship there are four short prayers that are understood to have great power. The first and most important of these is the *Ahuna vairya*, a prayer whose language and concepts are similar to those of the *Gathas* and which thus appear to be ancient. It confirms allegiance to the faith, and the opening sentence contains a declaration of truth. In a *Yasht* (hymn) addressed to the divinity Ashi there is what may be the earliest reference to the *Ahuna vairya*, where it is represented as literally a weapon against evil:

He smites me with the *Ahuna vairya*, so great a weapon as a stone the size of a house . . . (*Yt.17.20* Malandra 1983: 133).⁵

In later texts, such as the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, *Denkard* and *Shayest ne Shayest*, the *Ahuna vairya* is sometimes referred to as a safeguard against the consequences of actions considered to be dangerous.⁶ It was also used, it seems, to guard against the evils of pollution.⁷ A parallel development to the mythology which grew up around this prayer is the link between the *Ahuna vairya* and the divinity Sraosha (cf. *Y.57.22*), where the *Ahuna vairya* is used by Sraosha as a victorious weapon. In modern usage, Zoroastrians have three powerful agents which long seem to have been linked in their fight against evil, namely: the divinity, the substance *gomez*,⁸ and the prayer. The *Ahuna vairya* came to be regarded as the prototype of all prayer and, if necessary, its recitation may replace all other acts of devotion.

The three remaining prayers are all associated with the *Ahuna vairya*; the *Ashem vohu*, the *Yenghe hatam*, and the *Airyema ishyo*, of which only the latter is in Gathic Avestan. Of these three the *Ashem vohu* is said to be next to the *Ahuna vairya* in importance and sanctity and is the second prayer taught to a Zoroastrian child after the *Ahuna vairya* (Modi 1995: 348, 349). This prayer is a *manthra*, or formula, in praise of Asha and is always referred to as such in Zoroastrian exegesis and religious texts. For example, *Yt.21.1* is a eulogy of this prayer in which it is accredited with a value according to the importance of the circumstances in which it is recited. The *Yenghe hatam* is an adaptation of *Y.51.22*, a Gathic verse which refers to the sacrifice. It occurs at the end of the litanies of the priestly acts of worship, the *Yasna*, the *Visperad* and the *Vendidad*, and also in prayer formulas, such as the *Yashts*, the *Niyayish* and *Gahs*, which are used by laymen as well as priests.⁹ The *Yenghe hatam* differs from the above-mentioned prayers in that although it is perceived as a separate prayer, it is never recited separately.

The final prayer is the *Airyema ishyo* which is referred to less frequently

than the other three, and rarely in conjunction with them. Traditionally the prayer is important to lay worship, for it is part of the recital in the *Ashirwad* or wedding ceremony. It is part of the *Yasna* liturgy, following immediately after the *Gatha* which celebrates the marriage of Zarathushtra's daughter Pouruchista, which suggests that the association between Airyaman and weddings is ancient. The *Airyema ishyo* is also referred to in the *Avesta* as a *manthra* against sickness and impurity and, as with the *Ahuna vairya*, the *Airyema ishyo* was evidently felt to act as a powerful weapon against evil.¹⁰

The centrality of fire: Atash Nyayesh

Many of the devotional acts which are still, to this day, performed by Parsis are linked to the cult of the hearth fire. Some people remember their parents keeping a hearth fire, especially for ritual purposes, usually in the kitchen next to the regular fire used for cooking. Nowadays there are very few such hearth fires left in Bombay, but it is not uncommon to find households in Navsari and in rural areas of Gujarat that still have a special hearth which the women of the household decorate on festive occasions and fuel with the sandalwood of the sort used for the sacred temple fires. With respect to the obligatory prayers, these have to be recited before a source of light, be it sun, moon or the hearth fire. As noted above, the Gathic verses included in the *Kemna Mazda* indicate that fire was seen as a protective agent against evil.¹¹

The fact that the *Atash Nyayesh*, or prayer to fire, is popular as a prayer recited both in the fire temple as well as in the home, links it to the modern *Song of the Fire*. It is always prayed by those who keep the *parabs*, name-day feasts, of which the name-day feast of fire is one of the most popular. It seems clear that the prayer was addressed to the domestic hearth fire, since the only qualification is that the fire must be maintained by 'one of full age'; the fire referred to dwells in the house and 'cooks the evening and the morning meal'.¹² What appear to be the oldest verses of the *Atash Nyayesh* are thus addressed directly to the fire itself. Being the centre of domestic and religious life, the personified hearth fire was evidently regarded as being both a protector and friend of the household:¹³

Fire looks at the hands of all passers-by
 'What does the friend bring to the friend,
 The one that goes forth to the one that sits still?'
 (Ny.5.14)

We have no way of knowing when additions may have been made to the prayer: one suggestion would be that this development was linked to the temple cult of fire. The temple fire was tended by priests who, when reciting the traditional prayer to fire, may have added Gathic verses to it and also, perhaps, the dedication or *shnuman* to fire.¹⁴ It can be seen that the composition of

this prayer draws on the ritual worlds of both priests and laymen. It also contains verses that are strongly reminiscent of the *Yashts* both in terms of content and structure. For example the *Atash Nyayesh* describes the offerings of fuel, incense and nourishment made to the hearth fire by the worshipper in return for benefits such as sustenance and well-being (cf. *Yt*.5.130), manly valour and watchfulness (cf. *Yt*.10.10) and offspring who give support (cf. *Yt*.19.75). The various boons that will be granted by the fire, if it is propitiated, include blessings, herds of cattle, an active mind and a joyous life.

Meaning

The texts mentioned above have in common the fact that they are all rooted in the distant past with respect to their language, imagery and usage. Also, all were transmitted orally for centuries before being written down and, as far as the *kusti* prayers and *Atash Nyayesh* are concerned, consist of parts that belong to different historical eras. The question remains: how do Parsis today interpret these prayers, conveyed in an ancient language and archaic imagery?¹⁵

In the interviews for *Living Zoroastrianism* many interviewees said that they had been taught their prayers as children but with no explanation as to their meaning: ‘By rote, by rote! I was not even doing it with blind faith, I just said the prayers by rote’ (Kreyenbroek 2001: 173). Others discovered the meaning of prayers only later in life through priestly instruction, attending classes such as those offered by Zoroastrian Studies in Bombay, or as a result of a personal quest following a traumatic event such as the death of a close relative. For them, this meant learning about the significance of various rituals, calendar dedications, purity laws, and the meaning of the *gahs* (five watches of the 24 hours when prayers are recited).

For many Parsis, the prayers are understood to contain themes that we might describe as dualistic, albeit framed in a different way.¹⁶ Thus a number of interviewees took for granted the notion that the *kusti* is worn to protect the individual from evil which can manifest itself in various ways from ‘magic’ to pollution (Kreyenbroek 2001: 211, 252). Likewise, the power of prayer was something that many people referred to as something with which they were quite familiar.¹⁷ Mrs Munshi herself drew solace from reciting the *Airyaman ishyo* prayer during a time of illness. She also referred to the fact that some prayers are meaningful simply because of the power of the words.

The importance of fire in lay worship is evident in many people’s accounts of devotional life. Some of these relate to the domestic fire which is still kept by some people in their homes for ritual purposes. Most people who go to the fire temple have a favourite fire (Kreyenbroek 2001: 119). A final but recurring element in people’s description of their devotional lives was the perceived efficacy of prayer. This is no doubt a common attitude towards prayer generally, but it has particular resonance in Zoroastrianism because

the four-fold structure of invocation, followed by worship, petition and reward informs the earliest Zoroastrian religious texts, the *Yashts* and the *Nyayesh*.¹⁸ Views about religious observance emphasise the importance of prayer accompanied by action, or ritual. In fact, Kreyenbroek suggests that the focus is on 'orthopraxy' rather than 'orthodoxy' (Kreyenbroek 2001: 297). What is not clear, though, is whether this has long been the case or whether, as Kreyenbroek suggests, this development took place as a result in the decline of priestly knowledge once Zoroastrianism had taken root on Indian soil.¹⁹

In an interview conducted by Mrs Munshi with Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal, who was until recently the High Priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram in Bombay and a scholar of Zoroastrianism, he talked about his early education as a priest and the ways in which he taught the religion throughout his long career. From the outset of his training, great emphasis was placed on prayer and correct pronunciation: 'I used to pray so well that Kaikobad Dastur told my family to send me to the Andheri Boarding Madressa²⁰ and he felt that I had a bright future as he was greatly impressed by the manner in which I said my prayers.' Further scholarship combined learning the appropriate languages (Avestan and Pahlavi) with understanding the correct performance of rituals that would be passed down to the next generation of priests. In the interview it is interesting to note that at least half the questions asked by Mrs Munshi were about ritual, and these produced the most detailed answers from Dr Kotwal. Ritual was familiar territory to both priest and *behdin*.²¹ When asked to explain his understanding of the meaning of ritual Dr Kotwal replied:

Rituals are rituals. All rituals are good. You cannot say that one is weak and the other is strong. The most important thing is that you have to perform the rituals according to the religious law. That is most important, because in the *pavi*, where you perform the ritual, you are creating a kind of purity, you are bringing down the blessings of the divine beings on to the earth. When you perform a ritual, you are creating a *zor* – libation, and when you infuse it into the well, you are bringing down prosperity upon the entire universe, if the ritual is done properly. Noxious creatures, if any, are destroyed if the ritual is done properly, our streams and fountains get renewed strength. We get good rains due to the efficacy of the rituals, they bring prosperity and blessings. If man himself adopts the path of evil and then says that his prayers are not being answered, that is no good.

It is clear that from Dr Kotwal's point of view correct action, orthopraxy, is an essential part of correct doctrinal belief, orthodoxy. In other words, he does not distinguish between the two. This raises the question of how to apply such categories to Zoroastrian worship, since they do not seem to be part of the conceptual framework of those belonging to the faith.

Devotional song

Most Parsis who concern themselves with religious matters are familiar with the body of popular literature that includes the *monajats* or devotional songs and *garbas*, dances accompanied by song. Many of these entered oral transmission or were composed as a result of some event or historical circumstance and, as such, they are peculiar to a locality. They have not entered into mainstream Parsi literature in the same way as the *Qesse-ye Sanjan* for example, which tells the story of the arrival in India of Zoroastrians from Iran, thereby making it meaningful to Parsis across the Indian subcontinent (see Williams in this volume). It is clear though that the *monajats* were a conduit for the transmission of religious knowledge, particularly in the villages, and served to underpin the rituals that accompanied festive occasions. Mrs Munshi, who came from a rural background in Gujarat, had a vast repertoire of songs, many of which she had learnt from her grandmother and aunts and which were written down in copybooks. There are songs dedicated to specific deities, such as the 101 names of Ahura Mazda, a song to the moon and one dedicated to the morning sun that describes its rising over the *Atash Bahram*²² and over *Ava Yazad*, the female *yazata* of water. Another song accompanies the bathing of a child going for a *nahn*, ritual bath, prior to the celebration of an initiatory *navjote*, and can also be sung during the *nahn* prescribed for a bride and groom before marriage. The *Nahana ne Navdavva* describes the decorating of the fire temple in order to make it ready for the special occasion; each family member is allotted a task, thus ensuring that the traditional rituals are maintained in the proper way, and each name is associated with an action, thereby giving a narrative form to what would otherwise be merely a list.

There are numerous wedding songs that mark the various stages of the four-day marriage festival: most of these are festive songs with no particular religious content. The song that stands out among them is the *Atash nu Git* which, although traditionally sung at weddings and sometimes at *navjotes*, is actually dedicated to the founding of the second *Atash Bahram* in India in 1765 and describes, in idealised terms, the building of the *agiary* and the installation of the sacred fire within it. One can only speculate as to why a song whose inspiration was evidently the founding of a sacred fire came to be sung at weddings. A likely reason is the fact that the most auspicious day for people to get married is on the name-day feast of fire, *Adar mahino nu parab* (when both day and month dedicated to Fire coincide). Prior to the 'birthday' of fire, in households where a separate hearth fire was kept for worship, women would spring clean and decorate the fire place. The fire was sometimes kept alight during the whole of *Adar mah*, otherwise it was lit the day before and kept alight until the *Ushahin gah*, or dawn watch of *Adar roj* (Stewart 2004: 444 n.7). Mrs Munshi remembered that it was customary for women to sing the *Atash nu Git* while making the hearth fire ready; in fact it

was on such an occasion that she first heard it sung by her own mother. In this context the song became more of an act of worship, as a prayer, than a performance. Although it commemorates the founding of a temple fire, its usage in connection with the hearth fire, and also with weddings, brought it into the domain of the women of the household. In a sense, it represented the domestication of the temple fire, with the priestly ritual for feeding the fire, the *boy* ceremony, being replicated by women in their devotional rituals for tending the hearth fire. Prayers recited before the hearth fire include the *Atash Nyayesh*, so again we see the double context of a prayer originally dedicated to the hearth fire, but which was possibly adapted for use in the temple, returning once again to the domestic sphere.

Various versions of the *Atash nu Git* came to light once it became the subject of study, three of which will be discussed here. These are interesting because they demonstrate the ways in which oral texts can be adapted to different contexts while at the same time they retain their essential structures. In all versions that have been looked at so far it is evident that this composition is not just a festive song, but also a prayer, an act of worship and a ritual performance. There are references not only to lay devotional rituals such as the lighting of the oil lamp, incense burning and the festive silver *ses* or tray, but also to priestly rituals such as the feeding of the sacred fire in the fire temple, the *nirang* or consecrated bull's urine and the *nahn* or ritual purification. The stated purpose of the song is to accumulate merit for those who commission its performance, and reference is made to the rewards that will ensue, which include good fortune, righteousness, prosperity, songs, long life and, eventually, a place in heaven.

The *Atash nu Git*

Structure and content

The version of the song discussed in the article cited above was published in 1879 by one Sohrabji Chikanpur. I have suggested that two independent structures operate within this text and that these can also be found in other versions of the song (Stewart 2004: 456). The first of these pertains to the way in which the author has organised the material, both recognising its character as an oral text, and at the same time creating explicit slots for the addition of new material. The second is a thematic structure that reflects cosmological and eschatological ideas and follows Williams's analysis of the thematic structure of the *Qesse-ye Sanjan* (see Williams in this volume).

An almost exact reproduction of the 1879 text is contained in a book of Parsi *garbas* and *monajats* which were handwritten either by Mrs Munshi's mother or grandmother in the 1930s. The main difference between the two texts is that the long list of names in the 1879 text has been replaced in the

Munshi text: this suggests that the structure of the text is flexible enough to allow new material to replace that which is no longer relevant.

In another book of songs that also belonged to Mrs Munshi is a version of the *Atash nu Git* that was evidently sung in the precincts of the *agiary* on the *varadh pattar* day, part of the four-day wedding celebrations generally which takes place on the day before a wedding. First, women make the *drons* (bread that will be consecrated), and then they go to the *agiary* for the *varadh ni baj*, the *baj* which is done in memory of the departed members of the family. The interesting point about this song is that, as it is sung as part of a religious *baj* ritual, it comes into the category of religious texts. Here, the chorus is not ‘O friends let us go to the fire’, as occurs in the 1879 text between each and every line, but: ‘The month of *Adar* is good – hence it has dawned on this place, the sight of the holy fire is good – the *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin, it grants all our boons – the *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin.’

This version of the song does not refer to the construction of the *agiary*, but has been adapted so as to be addressed to a fire already in existence. Unlike the 1879 version, this fire has been personified to the extent that it is deemed capable of granting boons, as in the *Atash Nyayesh*. Thus we return to the familiar rhythm of offerings being made in return for the granting of requests. The name *Sohrabji* is mentioned thus linking this version with the 1879 text and the Munshi text.²³

The *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin
 My *Sohrabji*’s *ashodad* has been accepted (by the fire).
 Bai Bachubai’s great boon is granted, I will merrily play the drums,
 The *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin
 I will pay obeisance to it. His house will be blessed with cattle,
 The *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin
 The month of *Adar* is noble, hence it has dawned in this place,
 The *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin
 The *Atash Bahram* has granted my boons and the boons of my family,
 The sight of the fire is noble, what I seek I shall get. The sight of the fire is
 noble,
 The *Atash Bahram* is of noble origin.

The final version I shall discuss here is focused on the *Atash Bahram* in Udwada. This is particularly interesting because it appears to belong to a different oral tradition than the ones previously discussed. In the Udwada text for example, there are fewer headings, there are no long lists of names, there is no refrain, nor any mention of *Sohrabji*. However, the overall thematic structure that I have suggested above pertains to all versions.

There is a temptation, when presented with more than one version of the same text, to try to establish authenticity for one or the other; often, that

which can be proved to be of greater antiquity is considered more authentic. This is not a productive line of enquiry as far as oral texts are concerned, where we find different layers, which often reflect different authors, locations and times. It is thus not possible to determine whether the Udwada version of the song, as it is being sung today, pre-dates the 1879 text: both contain material which can be attributed to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which echo a more distant past.

In the Udwada text, the refrain 'O friends let us go to the fire' occurs only twice; this means that the effect of the chorus is lost, that is the repetitive, insistent call for people to take part in the event. However, the absence of the refrain from between each line of the song has the effect of enhancing its narrative element and making it a more coherent as a text which is to be read rather than performed.

The first section describes the idealised creation of a sacred fire and is analagous to the *bundahishn* (act of creation, see Williams in this volume). Towards the end of it we have the first mention of Udwada. The second stage of the song, representing *gumezishn*, or cosmological mixture, begins with the dispute referred to in the 1879 text which I have suggested refers to the quarrel between the Sanjana and the Bhagaria priests. This took place in Navsari and ended with the departure of the Sanjana priests in 1742. When the two texts are compared it appears that the Udwada version evidently refers to earlier events and it may be that the dispute goes back to the time when the community was divided into five *panths*, or districts, in the late thirteenth century. To judge from a passage contained in the *Qesse-ye Zartoshtian-e Hendustan*, it seems that this development was also the result of friction (Cereti 1991: 99). It is not known what had brought this about, but perhaps the number of priests competing to earn a living could no longer be sustained by the population of Sanjan. However, it should be emphasised that in the *Atash nu Git* references to historic events are oblique, and are not presented in chronological order. While one version may refer to the founding of a particular fire, in another certain elements may be added or omitted to allow the song to be addressed to a different fire/location/community.

The last stage of the song reflects the time of *wizarishn*, or renovation, and follows the same general pattern in the Udwada text as the 1879 version. One difference is that the Udwada version refers to several *agiarys* which were founded after 1879. Some of these appear in the *Bombay Gazetteer*: for example, *Dinshah Petit* – Udwada, 1891, *Dinbai Petit* – Viara, 1895, Bombay Fort, 1896, and *Coomwarju Umrika* – Bhavnagar, 1891. This shows that the song continued to develop; in other words, new material continued to be added, certainly until the end of the nineteenth century (see Hinnells 1985).

There are several interesting details included in this phase of the song. It is said, for example, that *Ardibehesht* will always be with the person who goes to the *Atash Bahram*, and that the one who worships the earth will be blessed by *Ava Yazad* and will have seven sons. It seems here that the 'seven sons'

could be a reference to the Amesha Spentas. In the 1879 text it is recorded: 'to my sister *Shirimbai*, *Dadar Hormazd* smiled'; however, here it says: 'My *Hoshangshah* and *Zarathushtra* laughed', and then, '*Zarathushtra* laughed over *Nargeshmai*', that is, he blessed her. This would appear to be an implied reference to the legend of the birth of the prophet in which it is said that he laughed at the moment of his birth, and that this had a disconcerting effect on those demons and sorcerers who were present (Anklesaria 1964: 85–6).

In the passage which refers to *Ava Yazad*, the interpolation of the refrain has the effect of severing the link between the *yazata* and her element. The *Udwada* text, on the other hand, maintains the link in a more coherent way, as can be seen from the following passages:

Udwada text

The one who has the *gahambar* festival,
her feet always sing to the tune of the
bells she will wear around her feet. She
will wear a necklace of nine strands. She
will always be full of gold, she will
always be full of pearls, she will always
be full of diamonds, diamond earrings
will hang from her ears.
The person who goes to the fire temple
will be blessed with all this.
Ava Yazad will also give all this to the
person and the waves of the sea are
connected with Ava Yazad.
Ava Yazad will come to the house of the
blessed on the waves of the sea, and just
as Ava Yazad is blessed so the lady of the
house of my Naurozbhai is blessed.

1879 text

As we go round (singing) this song
wearing bells on our ankles
O friends let us go to the fire
This person will get a necklace made
of nine metals,
O friends let us go to the fire
This person will be clothed with
pearls,
O friends let us go to the fire
This person will be encrusted with
diamonds,
O friends let us go to the fire
These are like waves of the sea,
O friends let us go to the fire
All this happens at my Sohrabji's
house,
O friends let us go to the fire
My Mae Ava Yazad

After this section, the *Udwada* text ends with a unique passage which is not included in the text of 1879, but is strongly reminiscent of the *Qesse-ye Zartoshtian-e Hendustan*:

Udwada text

Gustasp Padshah came to Zarathushtra
and *Zarathushtra* brought the good religion
to Hormazd and told Gushtasp Padshah to
follow the good religion of Hormazd.
And there was a tree, a cypress tree which
was like the book of the religion which
was brought by four angels (*fereshdas*/
yazatas) and this tree has twelve branches
and thirty leaves which are linked to the
thirty rajas of the Parsi calendar.
And each leaf has the name of Ahura

Qesse-ye Zartoshtian-e Hendustan

Then he (Zartosht) said: 'O good
natured Shahanshah, I have brought a
shoot of cypress, observe it well, when
you will plant it openly in the earth
you will understand the miracle . . .
As soon as the shoot of cypress was
planted in another place the leaves
appeared magically by order of the
Lord, Holy Creator. On its leaves there
was written:
'O Shahanshah, accept the best

Mazda, and naturally the *Avesta* is written on these leaves.
And Gushtasp Padshah has been told to follow the religion of Zarathushtra, and with this cypress tree will spread the acts of the religion and it is very meritorious, it is very spiritual, and *Ijashne* and *Vendidad* are being done . . .

religion, become aware!
Upon seeing this proof, Shah Vishtasp himself believed in the best religion. Then the wise *Zartosht* recited the twenty-one *Nasks* of the *Avesta* before the *Shah*. Thus the divine religion brought by Zartosht Spitaman was revealed to all in *Iran*; all, young and old, became sincerely followers of the *Mazdayasna* religion.

(Cereti 1991: 92–3).

Both this text and the song seem to have drawn on the more ancient material contained in the legendary tales of the *Shahname*.²⁴ The legend of *Gushtasp*'s (i.e. Vishtasp's) conversion by the prophet includes the following passage according to the *Shahname*:

Zardusht then planted him a noble cypress
Before the portal of the fane of fire,
And wrote upon that noble straight-stemmed tree: –
'Gushtasp is convert to the good religion'
Thus did he make the noble cypress witness
That wisdom was disseminating justice.

(Warner 1910, Vol. 5: 4)

The motif of a tree in connection with the conversion of King Vishtasp is also referred to at the beginning of the Pahlavi *Zand i Vohuman Yasn* when, in a dream, Zarathushtra is shown the trunk of a tree on which are four branches, one of gold, one of silver, one of steel and one of mixed iron. Ohrmazd tells him that these represent the four periods which will come, the first being when 'I and Thou will hold a conference of religion, King Vishtasp shall accept the religion, the figures of the "divs" shall totter . . .'.²⁵

Meaning

There are a number of early sources from which the *Atash nu Git* may have derived its motifs, from the scriptures to the epic literature, or again from a relatively recent text that was composed after the establishment of the community in India. The way in which religious material permeates people's consciousness is not necessarily restricted to formal instruction which anchors it in the scriptures, but through the medium of songs, stories and domestic observances. Stories from the *Shahname* for example, have been told by generations of Parsis and are still used to depict heroes and villains, vices and virtues. This has endowed the epic narrative, originating as it does in Iran, with a sacred character.

I have mentioned elsewhere that the song belongs to the realm of female

devotional life and represents the domestication of the sacred temple fire. The offering of food is a prominent aspect of the song and it was evident that, for many of the women interviewed, the preparation of special food for certain occasions was an essential part of their devotional life. In her book *The Good Parsi*, Tanya Luhrmann remarks that Zoroastrianism is a solitary religion. She goes on to describe the religious Parsi as someone who 'has as his or her main responsibility the recitation of prayers in ancient tongues, Avestan or Pahlavi . . . Zoroastrian prayer in Bombay is a private, hidden activity' (Luhrmann 1996: 36, 37). I suggest, on the contrary, that Zoroastrian devotional life embraces a multitude of activities that are communal, commensality being one of them.²⁶ Many religious ceremonies take place in non-religious spaces such as people's homes, or in communal gathering places such as a *baug* or garden, thus combining religious and social aspects.

Conclusion

Both categories of texts examined in this chapter contain concepts and imagery that go back to the earliest days of the faith. In the prayers, the forces of evil are held at bay by the power of prayer, by fire and by the wearing of the *kusti*. Power is ascribed in an undifferentiated way to gods, the fire, the sun, and to truth and purity. While it is difficult to extract any one of these elements, for example 'truth', and to interpret it within western moral concepts, what we can say is that the concept of dualism is prominent in these texts; this is a dualism that does not divide between the sacred and profane, or the material and spiritual, but between divinities and demons, and between harmful and beneficent creations, senses, actions and thoughts. We cannot tell when these notions developed into an organised theological system. There is no doubt, however, that there is a more pronounced layer of implicitly Zoroastrian ideas in the texts of the prayers when compared to those of the most ancient *Yashts*. While we cannot tell when, for example, the explicitly Zoroastrian verses such as those of the *Gathas* were added, it is the way in which they were added which is significant. The structure of the prayers which emerges as a result of these additions follows a pattern that appears in later Zoroastrian literature in so far as certain verses are set before and after the core of the text.²⁷

The cult of fire is likely to have been enhanced, in Zoroastrian tradition, through the development of the temple cult of fire. It seems possible, therefore, that the lengthening of the prayer to fire may have coincided with the elaboration of certain rituals; for example those that developed from the cult of the hearth fire when it became elevated to the temple fire. What is interesting is the fact that the cult of the temple fire then re-entered the domestic realm in the form of a song that celebrates the participation of laymen and women in the founding of a sacred fire.

While it is possible to substantiate the narrative content of the *Atash nu Git* with different versions of the song as well as historical documents and

archives, it is not possible to make assumptions with regard to those texts that come from a primary oral culture such as the ancient prayers. We cannot speculate sensibly, therefore, as to how these prayers were understood by worshippers in the early days of the faith.

Modern interpretations of meaning are complex. It is evident that Parsis today have mixed feelings regarding the purpose and meaning of prayer. What we can say is that there are themes and structures that have been reproduced within each new account. The offering of worship in return for rewards is one such theme that can be found in all the devotional literature discussed here, starting with the ancient *Yashts* and including the various versions of the *Atash nu Git*. The interesting point is that the boons asked for are invariably the same as those of the earlier texts, for example cattle, wealth and progeny; in other words they have become *idealised*. Contemporary views about the power and efficacy of prayer can be better understood when we consider the verses in question. The *Ahuna Vairya* is an actual weapon, the *kusti* a barrier which evil cannot penetrate, the *nirang* an agent to banish pollutants. Where ritual is concerned, Dr Kotwal remarks on the need to 'pray well' which is no doubt a reference to the need to pronounce the words in a proper way in order for the ritual to be effective. Those interviewed do not talk about evil or guilt as portrayed in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but rather as a sense of wrong-doing that encompasses areas such as purity and pollution. They also express a desire to honour creation and to worship the *Amesha Spentas* as well as showing an awareness of their respective creations.

When viewed in conjunction with contemporary approaches to the ancient prayers, the *Atash nu Git* provides us, uniquely, with a vehicle by which to understand the nature and technique of Parsi Zoroastrian prayer. The principal technique of the song, insofar as it emulates prayer, is to focus attention on the communal fire. Fire also provides a point of reference for the prayers and again, through the song, we see how a prayer that has a central place in the priestly ritual of the temple fire is appropriated by women in the community and celebrated in a parallel ritual within the domestic sphere. The song also serves to illustrate other properties of prayer namely to bring down blessings upon the worshipper and, more specifically, to grant rewards. Whereas in the ancient prayers the boons requested have become fixed and for the modern worshipper are merely symbolic, the song makes clear the process by which prayer is efficacious to the extent that it brings goodness and blessings into the household of those who commission its performance. The various voices in the song can be distinguished in the dialogue that takes place between the lead performer, the chorus and the community itself which is represented in the list of the names of all the professions, the names of the philanthropists who have endowed the various *agiarys* and the names of those getting married.

As a characteristically oral composition, the *Atash nu Git* demonstrates how certain historical moments become fixed, whereas others are more fluid,

and events in recent memory replace older ones. It also shows how historical events become so condensed as to be unintelligible without the underpinning of historical data. As an act of worship, the song illustrates the significance attached to performance, to ritual and to repetition. It explains the way in which texts in oral transmission are organised in so far as the passing on of any kind of knowledge is dependent upon the presence of more than one person: it depends, in other words, on 'community'.

A final observation concerns interpretive techniques. The instinct to classify in western scholarly tradition has meant that we look for religion in religious texts and popular culture in popular texts. But when we examine the composite nature of oral texts, even those that have emerged within the last 200 years, we see fragments of original narratives, both real and fictional, which have been passed down through different genres of literature. Stories and ideas from the Pahlavi books found their way into the epic literature and from there passed to the Indian subcontinent, where they were absorbed into the *Qesses* and songs. Prayers contain verses from the *Gathas* and *Vendidad* and structures and themes from the *Yashts*. At the same time there is considerable overlap, in so far as stories and themes from the *Yashts* are also reproduced in the epic literature and the prayers. When devotional literature is drawn from such a diverse range of material there is likely to be a wide dissemination of religious ideas.

The transmission of Parsi beliefs, rituals and observances is essentially oral, and this is likely to have been the case for Zoroastrians throughout history. Customs that have become part of Zoroastrian tradition at some point in its history are those that support doctrinal beliefs and teachings. But when confronted with the classificatory notions of some western scholars, whose analysis of religious life tends to be text-based, it seems that for many, categories such as doctrine, ritual and observance, and orthodoxy versus orthopraxy have little meaning. In some cases the tools of interpretation have been chosen regardless of the subject matter. This can result in an effort, on the part of those inside the religion, to force the absorption of Zoroastrian tradition into a set of horizons generated by those outside the religion.

Notes

- 1 In certain passages in the *Yashts*, the 'girdle' is worn by men and gods alike (*Yt*.8.14, *Yt*.15.57 in Malandra 1983: 145, 102). In the *Avesta*, the sacred cord is referred to symbolically as the spiritual girdle of the divinity Haoma (*Y*.9.25 in Modi 1922: 187).
- 2 *Sd*.XLVI.1 in West 1977b: 309.
- 3 *Dd*.XXXIX.19 in West 1977a: 128–9.
- 4 *Dd*.XXXIX.20 and 28 in West 1977a: 129 and 131–2, *Sd*.X.4 in West 1977b: 268.
- 5 See also *Yt*.19.81 (Malandra 1983: 95) and *Y*.57.22 (Malandra 1983: 139).
- 6 *ShnSh*.XII.18 in West 1977c: 346.
- 7 The greatest Zoroastrian ceremony of purification; as a person becomes progres-

sively freer from impurity he or she recites the *Ahuna vairya*. Again, the *Ahuna vairya* is chanted when disposing of hair and nail parings which are dead matter and therefore considered impure (*Vd.XVII.4*, 6 in Darmesteter 1980: 187). The power of the *Ahuna vairya* to repel evil was elaborated upon in Zoroastrian exegesis and in later religious texts; in *Yasna* 19.8–10 it is said that Ahura Mazda pronounced the *Ahuna vairya* before creating the corporeal world, and that after this pronouncement Angra Mainyu was driven away. In the *Bundahishn* the effect of the *Ahuna vairya* upon Angra Mainyu is described in detail (*GBd.1.21* in West 1977c: 8).

- 8 Unconsecrated bull's urine traditionally used as a ritual purificatory substance.
- 9 In the *Denkard*, the *Yenghe hatam* is described as a prayer in praise of Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas. Through them, all beings have been brought into existence, and through their especial creations mankind is provided with the right rituals for worship (see *Dk.IX*, XLIX, (1); *Dk.IX*, XXVII (1) in West 1977d: 309 and 233).
- 10 See *Yt.3.5* and *Vd.XX.12*, XI.7 (Darmesteter 1980: 223, 140); Chapter XXII of the *Vendidad* describes how Airyaman is called from his mansion in the sky by Nairyosangha the messenger, in order to heal the diseases which afflict mankind (Darmesteter 1980: 232ff.).
- 11 In a later, Pahlavi fragment named the *Drayishn-i Ahreman o Dewan* it is said that the fire of the house 'smites' the daevas (Anklesaria 1957: 133, 134).
- 12 *Ny.5.7,8,13* (Dhalla 1908: 155, 159, 175).
- 13 See also *Y.46.2*. Chapter 37 of the *PRDd.* answers the question 'How should the fire be kept in the house?' (Williams 1990, part II: 64–5) which indicates that this cult remained a theme in religious texts after the advent of the temple cult of fire. The role of fire as a protector of the house is also attested in an early Persian poem, the *Humayname*, which despite its Muslim authorship, contains some evidently Zoroastrian elements:
 . . . Resolve to worship fire
 Prepare yourself a place near the fire
 One cannot rest at all without fire
 Houses are protected by fire.
 (Arberry 1963: 13)
- 14 *Yasna* 62, which is addressed to Atar, the *yazata* of fire, corresponds to verses 7–16 of the *Atash Nyayesh* and it seems possible that additions were made to these verses when they came to be recited in Zoroastrian priestly ritual.
- 15 It should be noted here that there are many who say that the prayers make no sense at all either in terms of their literal meaning or as symbolic of the power of the word. The discussion here is restricted to those who have formed some opinion as to the meaning of prayer.
- 16 Nineteenth-century western scholarly terms such as 'dualism', 'monotheism', and 'orthodoxy', orthopraxy' are rarely used by those who practice Zoroastrianism unless they have received a western education.
- 17 See Kreyenbroek (2001: 166, 234, 296).
- 18 The theme of reward-bringing action is common throughout the Pahlavi texts and finds its way into the Iranian epic literature. See Stewart (2007); see also Hintze (2004) where she discusses patterns of gift exchange in Indo-Iranian and early Zoroastrian culture.
- 19 When the *Avesta* was translated by Anquetil du Perron it became apparent that ritual was indeed a focal part of religious life. Again, it was primarily matters of ritual that prompted Parsi priests and lay people to seek the advice of their Persian co-religionists in the fifteenth century.

- 20 Referring to the late Kaikobad Mehrjirana of Navsari. Dr Kotwal received a religious as well as regular education as well as at the boarding school in Andheri, a suburb of Bombay.
- 21 *Behdin* refers to one of the ‘good religion’, a lay person.
- 22 An *Atash Bahram* is the most important of three grades of Zoroastrian sacred fires. Once established through an elaborate ritual process it is ritually tended five times a day and never allowed to be extinguished.
- 23 The role of this man in the compilation of the 1879 text is referred to in a weekly column in the Bombay *Jame* (5 October 1997) written by a Mr Mulchand Verma. He says that in those days there was a Parsi named Sorabji Chikander – nicknamed ‘Solu Baylo’, who was famous for compiling *garbas*; however, he (the author) did not think anyone had cared to write these down.
- 24 Stausberg discusses the interesting hypothesis of the Persian hero Zal in the *Shahname* being transformed into the ‘Jal Bawa’ or Father Jal, a legendary figure who attracted a following amongst Parsis in Mumbai. Stausberg (2004: 694–7).
- 25 B.T. Anklesaria (1957: 101). This section is repeated with seven branches of the tree representing the seven periods.
- 26 The *Humbandagi* described by Stausberg (2004: 699ff.) is an example of a more recent move towards congregational worship.
- 27 For a discussion of ring composition as a structure in Older Avestan texts, see Hintze (2002). The prayers discussed here do not conform to this more complex structure as they are of a highly composite nature.

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Abbreviations (diacritics have been used with reference to titles of publications):

<i>Dd</i>	<i>Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i>
<i>Vd</i>	<i>Vendīdād</i>
<i>GBd</i>	<i>Bundahish-Bahman Yasht</i>
<i>Dk</i>	<i>Dēnkard</i>
<i>PRDd</i>	<i>Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i>
<i>ShnSh</i>	<i>Shāyast nē-Shāyast</i>
<i>Sd</i>	<i>Sad Dar</i>
<i>Yt</i>	<i>Yasht</i>
<i>Ny</i>	<i>Nyāyesh</i>
<i>Y</i>	<i>Yasna</i>

Part II

PARSIS IN NINETEENTH- CENTURY INDIA

PARTNER IN EMPIRE

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and the public culture of nineteenth-century Bombay

Jesse S. Palsetia

Parsi pioneer

The Parsis of India have been referred to as a minority as agents of social change (Kulke 1974). The history of the Parsis may well be interpreted as the attempt to preserve and shape a common community identity in India in the midst of historical change (Palsetia 2001). Historically, as one of the smallest communities in India, the Parsis have exerted considerable influence, out of proportion to their numbers, in the interests of the safeguarding and strengthening of Parsi identity. From the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries the Parsis passed through key phases, emerging from being an insular group to a highly Westernized community of pluralistic outlook. By the nineteenth century, the Parsis were a most socially adaptive community safeguarding an orthodox faith. The Parsis' social adaptability proved very successful under British colonialism, and the Parsis emerged as a model of Indian community that had accommodated itself to the transition to British power. The Parsis played a significant role in the commercial, educational and civic milieu of Bombay city. In the nineteenth century, Bombay became the headquarters of the Parsi community of India and exercised influence over the world Zoroastrian diaspora (see Hinnells 2006). The Parsis also shaped Bombay colonial society and the development of Indian public culture. This form of agency on the part of the Parsis in the urban setting represents an extension of internal processes to the benefit of Parsi identity. The Parsis' socio-economic pre-eminence under colonialism can be seen as part of the larger Parsi historical imperative to safeguard identity and remain economically, social and politically relevant as a community at any given time.

The subject of the Parsis under colonialism raises questions regarding the adaptability of Indians to colonialism and specifically the contribution of colonials and colonial groups to public culture in colonial society. The public sphere remains an important focus of Indian studies, as it speaks to the

political and cultural values of Indians under colonialism. Public or civic culture may be defined as the public or civic realm and ideological arena in which decision-making is shaped and attitudes formed in the urban setting of colonial India. The public culture of colonial urban Western India owes its origins not to a newly emergent bourgeoisie, nor to Indians formally educated in the English language, but to a category of persons at times referred to in the historical literature as urban notables or *shetias* (see Dobbin 1972; Masselos 1974; Haynes 1991: ch. 7). These individuals and families came from various Indian castes and communities. They held in common their contacts with the British ruling group, and the perception as men of special local influence and ability. The early development of public culture in India involved the efforts and struggles of Indian notables to establish an advantageous place within the unequal power system of colonialism. Indian accommodation to colonialism aimed to shape a political culture sensitive to Indian concerns under British authority.

Indians who sought accommodation under colonialism from the late eighteenth century operated in a new ideological environment. As colonialism expanded in India and around the world, ideas and assumptions about the supremacy of Western political and cultural values emerged, and that went in tandem with the spread of political empire and the extension of European economic influence (cf. McCully 1940; Black 1966; Marx and Engels 1972). Colonials, particularly non-European colonials, operated within the confines of language and symbol, as well as power, adopted from the colonial rulers whether they resisted or collaborated with colonialism (Nandy 1983: xv, 3). Collaboration or cooperation with colonialism formed a ready response, as much as confrontation, on the part of certain Indians, as it conformed to a pattern of political accommodation in the interests of identity preservation evident throughout Indian history.¹

Under colonialism Indian notables drew upon a set of new words and phrases that carried particular currency for the British. In the first half of the nineteenth century, such words included the public good, good governance, humanitarianism and loyalty. However, Indian appropriation of imperial ideologies did not indicate the wholesale adoption of a foreign culture by the colonized. Indian cultural accommodation to British ideologies and discourse formed an expression of compliance, and, simultaneously, of colonial autonomy. For while Indians understood the meanings of these words, phrases and models from the British, they altered these meanings, in the process influencing an emergent public culture, and that spoke to an idiom of British-Indian community rather than an idiom of empire alone (Haynes 1991: 106–7). The agency of early Indian urban notables under colonialism aimed at the creation of a colonial civic culture receptive and sensitive to Indian requirements. Moreover, the Indian appropriation of imperial idioms was often in advance of British attempts to shape opinion and culture. Significantly, the corollary to this accommodation to imperial ideologies was the perpetuation

of symbolic structures that upheld and stabilized imperial domination. The response of Jejeebhoy and the Indian urban notables to colonialism, consequently, reflects the response of a particular generation of Indians of the first half of the nineteenth century. A colonial public culture emerged that aimed to meet Indian requirements, if ultimately under British authority.

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (1783–1859) was a leading merchant, philanthropist and influential citizen in Bombay and Western India during the first half of the nineteenth century.² Jejeebhoy was a leader of the Parsi community and a pioneer in the formation of public culture in early colonial society, specifically in Bombay, though his example is instructive and representative of developments in urban culture across India (cf. Kling 1976). Jejeebhoy emerges as an example of Indian genius and agency within this culture. The contribution of Jejeebhoy and the Indian urban notables to the formation of colonial culture forms an important focus to the themes of collaboration, agency and the Indian response under colonialism. Jejeebhoy exemplified the collaborative relationship that formed between leading Indians and the British at Bombay under colonialism. Jejeebhoy would utilize his contacts with colonialism both to shape his image as a great philanthropist and eminent citizen and to enhance the potentialities of Indians in the public culture of colonial urban Bombay.

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy began to appropriate British idioms and to influence public culture under colonialism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Jejeebhoy's and the *shetias'* involvement with the British would encompass various, if related, aims: for the development of stable socio-political relationships, the enhancement of individual and family reputations and, significantly, the promotion of social welfare. The urban notables' gradual adjustment to British imperial idioms, such as their involvement in Western-style charity and participation in imperial rites, would afford the Indian notables the avenues to enhance their socio-political role in British colonial society. The role of Indians in culture production becomes evident not just in deference to imperial-driven objectives but also in response to their own requirements.

The idea of 'partnership'

The ability of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and his class to assume influential roles in colonial society went to the heart of the imperial experiment in India. The British presence in India wholly depended on Indian cooperation from its inception, and highlighted the important role of Indian assistants and collaborators. Jejeebhoy and other Indian businessmen of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries accepted the British as the supreme authority in India, and welcomed the security and rewards of the British–Indian association. Unlike a pre-existing Indian elite such as the Indian princes, the Indian business class forged ties with the British, based on commercial cooperation and service. British–Indian commercial collaboration spawned

the rise of new Indian communities and groups to economic prominence, such as the Parsis, Marwaris, Baniyas, and later Bohras and Khojas. The Parsis were in regular contact with the British from the eighteenth century, and through their economic collaboration with them gained economic pre-eminence among Indian communities in Western India (White 1995). The urban centers were the loci of economic and political activity. The urban politics of Western India conformed to a pattern of various Indian communities competing and cooperating with one another, while seeking economic and socio-political advantage from colonialism. An older center such as Surat in Western India was distinguished by highly competitive inter-community relations (Das Gupta 1979). The British possession of Bombay from the seventeenth century provided security and opportunities for new commercial classes, such as the Parsis, to migrate to the city, and the migration of Indians to Bombay secured the city as the major entrepôt in Western India. At Bombay, a more cooperative socio-political dynamic emerged amongst Indian communities and with the British. Bombay provided Indians greater opportunity to rise to exceptional prominence within colonial society (Masselos 1974: 1–46; Sirsikar 1999: 5–17).

Jejeebhoy's ideas of public service, charity and British–Indian partnership had its genesis in his early business world, and the formation of British–Indian economic relations at Bombay. Jejeebhoy was born in Bombay but only permanently settled in the city from his family home in Navsari, Gujarat in 1799 at the age of 16. In Bombay, he began on the road to self-made status by collecting and selling empty bottles, which earned him the appellation or surname of Batliwala or Bottlewaller (trader in bottles) among Parsis. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Jejeebhoy joined with his uncle and cousin to trade with China, and made four trips to East Asia up to 1808 (Mody 1959: 10–14). Jejeebhoy was able to translate his humble commercial origins in Bombay into the status of merchant prince by exploiting novel business opportunities in connection with other Indians and ultimately the British. In 1814 Jejeebhoy began his own shipping business, starting with his first ship the *Good Success*, and in 1818 established Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy & Co. (Mody 1959: 32). The British East India Company held a monopoly on the British trade between Europe and Asia up to 1833. Jejeebhoy and other private Indian and British merchants and agency houses known as country traders handled a sizable portion of the inter-Asian trade (Greenberg 1951: 1–17). Jejeebhoy's consortium supplied resources, particularly cotton and opium, from the interior of India to the chief Indian ports for shipment to China and other East Asian centers. Their consignments were handled by European agency houses that ultimately recompensed traders for their wares. Jejeebhoy would supply Indian cotton to the British for export to Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. Jejeebhoy emerged as the principal Indian merchant at the time in the China trade. A substantial part of Jejeebhoy's wealth would be made in the opium trade (Greenberg 1951: 146, 150–1, 164; Bulley

2000: 151f; Farooqui 2005: 209–25; Farooqui 2006: 17–49). The China trade put Jejeebhoy in association with the major European agency houses like Forbes Forbes & Co., Russell & Co., Daniel & Co. and, most importantly, Jardine Matheson & Co.

The business world of the Indian merchant involved in the Asian trade in the first half of the nineteenth century was not without risk. Consignments could be damaged, the remittance of payments was often delayed, and Indians bore the principal risks associated with the opium trade (Darukhanawala 1939: 508–9). Notwithstanding the limitations, British–Indian commercial cooperation from the eighteenth century produced not only a highly profitable economic relationship, but also socio-political linkages. Under the conditions of oligopoly commerce, merchants freighted shipments of goods on each other's ships, agency houses waived commissions on consignments between parties, and offered other assistance for the conclusion of each other's transactions (Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Manuscripts [hereafter cited as J.J. MSS], vol. 375: 21, 133; J.J. MSS, vol. 349: 37; Karaka, vol. 2: 79–84). Business partners in this commercial culture referred to each other as 'friends' and other business houses as 'neighbors' (Siddiqi 1982: 301–24). Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and William Jardine were personal friends from 1806. The business ethics of honest dealing among merchants and the profitable conclusion of trade informed the values of this culture. Jejeebhoy's chief preoccupation was the efficient conduct of his commerce, and in particular the welfare of his goods and the prompt remittance of his payment (Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy [hereafter J.J.] to Daniel & Co. 24 Dec 1838, J.J. MSS, vol. 375: 131–2). No evidence suggests that Jejeebhoy's worries about the health of his soul and the need to ease one's conscience as a result of his business activities entered his charitable calculations. Furthermore, it was the successful individual and collective rewards of his business world that suggested to Jejeebhoy the benefits of an expanded socio-political partnership with the British. These benefits included both the opportunity to gain individual prestige and foster a broader social reward.

The political benefit of collaboration with colonialism for the Indian notables was confirmed when, in the later eighteenth century, the British recognized the Indian businessmen as both leaders of their respective caste and community institutions of internal government known as *panchayats* and *mahajans*, and the representatives of their communities to the British in Bombay. Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy became a member of the Parsi Panchayat in 1823, and was considered the representative of the general Indian community of Bombay by the British from the 1830s (Davar 1949: 39; Dobbin 1972: 24). In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the British acknowledged loyal Indian notables as important members of their communities with a special role to play in Bombay society. In 1827, Indian notables joined with the British in promoting education in Bombay by subscribing to the Bombay Native Education Society and Elphinstone Institution scholarships.

Jejeebhoy contributed some Rs. 18,000 to both funds (Mody 1959: 172). By 1834, the British appointed prominent Indians as Justices of the Peace in Bombay. This was followed a decade later with the right of Indians to sit as Jurors on Grand Juries (Dobbin 1972: 24–5).

The political socialization of the Indian communities to British authority also offered advantages for Indians, including the Parsis, to strengthen internal moral community. In 1787, the Parsis utilized British recognition of the Parsi Panchayet of Bombay as the internal government of the Parsis to strengthen community identity in the urban setting. Backed by British recognition, the Panchayet passed various regulations or *bundobasts* for the strengthening of Parsi custom and identity (Jejeebhoy 1953: 295–323; Davar 1949: 1–38; Palsetia 2001: 75–95). This dual process of successfully operating under British authority and utilizing the latter in support of Indian interests proved a tremendous incentive to Indian efforts to shape a colonial culture conducive to their interests, and specifically motivated Jejeebhoy towards public activity. Within the confines of colonialism, then, certain Indians utilized the very mechanisms of British authority to satisfy Indian requirements.

Charity

The advantages for Indians in adhering to imperial idioms are clearly evident in the Indian response to charity under colonialism. The use of charity by Indians is a major theme in the development of public culture in India. The pattern of gifting and providing charity to the community was one Jejeebhoy and other Indian merchants were familiar with, as charity was a religious duty and a marker of social standing within Indian communities. Charity among Indians also formed an important and complex system of support for community and identity (Palsetia 2005: 202–3). The concept of exchange, reciprocity and charity has ancient roots in Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrian ethics enjoined all Zoroastrians to contribute to the material world through charity (Dhalla 1963: 75–80, 198). Parsi charity was particularly significant as it had both aided the settlement of Parsis across Western India and, with growing Parsi wealth, by the nineteenth century was extended in support of the wider community. Parsi charity functioned to foster internal community bonds and acted as a lubricant of good inter-community relations. Parsi charity provided the moral and material supports of Parsi community life, such as the building of fire temples and towers of silence or *dokhmas*, and hostels and housing. In addition, Parsi charity tailored itself to the requirements of the larger community, for example in providing famine relief and building hostels and wells for Indians. Individual Parsis not only gained religious merit but also created a peaceful and tolerant social milieu favorable to protecting the interests of a tiny minority like the Parsis (Hinnells 1985: 261–326).

British colonialism in India witnessed a change in the character of public charity, as from the nineteenth century the British encouraged new forms of Western-style charity that included the contribution to educational institutions, hospitals and patriotic funds (Haynes 1987: 339–60; White 1991: 303–20). In addition to their role as patrons of more traditional Indian charities such as temples and religious rites, Indian notables contributed to these more Western-style vehicles of charity. By the nineteenth century, Indian charity in emulation of British standards became an important means of gaining recognition in the public culture, as Indian donors and philanthropists sought to become worthy of imperial recognition and advancement.

The development of public charity in India from the nineteenth century is often depicted as an imperial-driven initiative to both inculcate loyalty and associate Indians with Western values. In fact, Indian-driven charity in deference to Western standards also aimed to advance Indian social requirements. As the historian Douglas Haynes writes in his examination of Surat, Indian merchant charity and other forms of civic ritual aimed to appease and fashion stable moral bonds with the British in the interests of trade, family prestige, and social and religious life (Haynes 1991: 108).

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy sensed the multiple advantages of charity in colonial society. Jejeebhoy's first charity is recorded to have been in 1822, on the occasion of his eldest son's marriage, in relief of the debts of the poor in a debtor's jail to the sum of Rs. 3,000 (*Bombay Times*, 16 April 1859). By the 1840s, Jejeebhoy's regular involvement in business affairs diminished, whereas his commitment to charity increased. Jejeebhoy's charities encompassed public works, non-communal charities and Parsi-centered donations, reflecting the diverse political, social and religious motivations that inspired his giving. The munificence of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy's charities would be the hallmark of his public image. At the time of this death, the total of Jejeebhoy's charity was noted to be Rs. 2,459,736 or in excess of £245,000, not including private bequests and donations (*Bombay Times*, 16 April 1859; Mody 1959: 172–5).

Furthermore, Jejeebhoy set the pattern in the first half of the nineteenth century of tailoring Western-style charity in India to Indian concerns. Jejeebhoy was the first Indian, indeed, the first non-European colonial subject, to suggest large-scale charitable projects in partnership with the British. Jejeebhoy conceived the projects to be in 'partnership', whereby the British acted as equal co-financiers and trustees of the charity. Significant personal political calculation entered Jejeebhoy's proposal of the charities, specifically to promote his involvement in decision-making alongside the British thereby enhancing his personal status in Bombay society. Jejeebhoy clearly aimed to raise his public profile and craft an image of himself as the leading Indian in Bombay colonial society. At the same time, Jejeebhoy's charitable engagement aimed at a larger goal. The language of a partnership between Indian notables and the British in Bombay civic society aimed to redefine the public good in Bombay. Through a partnership with the British over charitable and

other projects, Jejeebhoy aimed to facilitate a public culture receptive to the Indian public good. The latter point is significant as it challenges the idea of Indians under colonialism as solely motivated by 'the race for influence, status and resources' (Seal 1973: 323). A broader intellectual engagement of imperial ideologies by Indians was underway. Jejeebhoy's charities were the most conspicuous aspect of the expansive socio-political outlook he came to espouse and quietly articulate. Moreover, Jejeebhoy would greatly innovate and develop the character of charity and civic leadership as much in advance of changes in British standards of public service as in deference to them.

The Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Hospital

The construction of the Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Hospital illustrates Jejeebhoy's innovative engagement of imperial ideologies. The Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Hospital was a precedent in the agency of Indians to utilize Western-style charity in the service of Indian interests. It was the first civilian hospital in India, and between 1840 and 1852 it cost Jejeebhoy over Rs. 200,000 or over £20,000. The scheme for the hospital was the most ambitious gambit to date on the part of an Indian, amidst the gradual involvement of Indians in public charity during the first half of the nineteenth century. Jejeebhoy's hospital scheme aimed to transform Indians from minor donors to charities into executive partners of the British in the establishment of public projects. The project brought together private Indian interests and different levels of government in India. Jejeebhoy offered his financial resources and input to the hospital project. Jejeebhoy's proposal emerged from his desire to advance his status in colonial society through the promotion of a long-sought-after scheme by the British to promote medical care in Bombay. Jejeebhoy proposed to invest a lakh of rupees (Rs. 100,000) if the government of Bombay matched the sum. Jejeebhoy furthermore promoted his input in decision-making in the hospital project. Jejeebhoy's ideas were gleaned from indigenous experience with medicine in India. He hoped for a new hospital that catered to a diverse, if segregated, clientele along caste and economic lines. Jejeebhoy hoped to co-opt the British in a scheme to meet Indian cultural standards, as much as to satisfy the British desire for a government-run hospital. Jejeebhoy communicated to his friend James Farish his proposal on 19 March 1838:

I am fully sensible how many benefits the government has already bestowed on the public, and of its anxiety still to promote the welfare of the subject, and therefore am assured that the evils have only to be pointed out to secure remedial measures, or at least the warmest sympathies.

(J.J. MSS, vol. 357: 1–2)

Jejeebhoy's hospital scheme was considerably advanced for its time. It sought to involve British and Indian interests in socio-political collaboration and promote the improvement of medical care in Bombay through the building of the first public hospital in Western India. Indeed, in a period when the idea of the state and private enterprise collaborating in public projects was unheard of, Jejeebhoy's idea was novel. As Williamson Ramsay, the friend and chronicler of Jejeebhoy's charities, writes:

In a country that could provide no legal, legislative, or corporate charity for the promotion of the public good and relief, it was left to some single mind of unusual energy, much in advance of current impressions and customs, and with great means at command, that the remedy in such cases can be effected.

(Ramsay 1855: 21)

Notwithstanding Jejeebhoy's ambitions, the hospital scheme encountered considerable bureaucratic and cultural inertia, and exposed the naivety of Jejeebhoy's idea of equal partnership among colonials and British in India. A basic cultural and political difference emerged over the nature of medical care envisioned by the British in India, and their appreciation of Indians' role in its disposition. British colonialism in India inevitably aimed to subordinate Indians, not raise them to equal partners (Bayly 1996: 264–83; Metcalf 1995: 24). The committee created to oversee the plans for the hospital, composed of British doctors and officials, in its draft report of 21 April 1840, proposed a hospital and teaching college along lines envisioned by the British official Sir Robert Grant, and one that replicated British standards of patient care in the housing and treatment of Indians (J.J. MSS, vol. 357: 96–114). Moreover, on 25 July 1840, the hospital committee reinterpreted Jejeebhoy's proposal to be complementary to its objectives and relegated Jejeebhoy to the role of a mere donor to the project (J.J. MSS, vol. 357: 130–40). Jejeebhoy's frustration over the difficulties, revealed in his private papers, illustrates the underlying tension between British and Indian interests and, significantly, how this tension influenced the Indian response. Both Jejeebhoy's ambition for a significant personal role in the hospital scheme alongside the British, and also for what he believed to be the opportunity for effective medical care in Bombay were to some degree frustrated. In response to the draft report of the hospital committee, on 14 May 1840, Jejeebhoy writes: 'I am free to confess that I have been used to look for some useful share in the management of the new hospital . . . and to indulge a hope that I might be associated with European friends' (J.J. MSS, vol. 357: 59–65).

Notwithstanding the obstacles, Jejeebhoy's and other Indian notables' continued participation in public charity was a measure of the imperative to remain relevant in the new political regime, as well as to fulfill charitable aims. In a letter of 16 November 1840 to W. R. Morris, the secretary to the

Bombay government, Jejeebhoy had resolved that the goal of improved medical care in Bombay superseded any personal difficulties in the project:

I am happy to concur and request you will convey to the Honorable the Governor in Council my ready accession to the proposed measures. . . . As my concurrence . . . does away with any remaining obstacles, I hope and trust my warmest desire to see the hospital erected will be fulfilled without further delay and that its erection will be immediately commenced upon and speedily completed . . . in order to further facilitate a measure which must prove so very beneficial to the whole community . . .

(J.J. MSS, vol. 357: 162–4)

Jejeebhoy and the Indian notables in fact were particularly well suited to meet the imperial challenge by virtue of their wealth. Jejeebhoy, through the utilization of his substantial financial resources, resolved to remain active in the hospital project, and was unwilling to forsake his material and moral investment. Between 1840 and 1852, Jejeebhoy provided funds to purchase land for the new hospital and college in Byculla, the physical erection of the hospital, and the building of an obstetric institution. The government named the new hospital in honor of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, as the largest private donor to the hospital project. On 3 January 1843, the foundation stone for the hospital was laid in the company of Sir George Arthur, the governor of Bombay, and Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy. The ceremony was performed with full Masonic honors – a Western tradition adopted by Indian elites in India and symbolizing their fraternity with British officials. In May 1845 the hospital opened to patients. Jejeebhoy's contribution to the Hospital, the Grant Medical College, and the obstetric institution comprised his single largest charitable donation to a non-Parsi object.

Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institution and the accommodation to modernity

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy was particularly adept at utilizing the British connection in the interests of Indian social advancement. The Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institution is an important example: an institution conceived to provide humanitarian relief and fund the education of Parsis and other Indians across Western India. The Institution was the first independent, Indian-run educational institution in Western India opening in 1849; and by 1860 some 18 schools educated some 2,000 pupils of both genders. The Sir J.J.P.B. Institution was Jejeebhoy's largest public charity at a cost of some Rs. 444,000 or over £44,000.

The by-laws of the J.J.P.B. Institution were clearly an expression of the culture of collaboration and partnership in Bombay. Jejeebhoy had two

objectives in establishing the Benevolent Institution. Firstly, he sought to secure for Parsis an educational system that did not threaten their religious beliefs. By the 1830s, Christian missionary proselytism was perceived as a threat to the Parsis and other Indians who placed their children in mission schools (Palsetia 2006). Secondly, Jejeebhoy sought to secure the involvement of the government of Bombay as trustee, which would provide the institution with a level of stability in its administration. The stability offered by the British association was a major benefit aimed for by Jejeebhoy in all of his proposals for charitable partnerships with the British. In addition to an educational and charitable organ, the J.J.P.B. Institution was ultimately to function as a sort of substitute panchayat for the Parsis, and which Jejeebhoy would come to dominate. The Parsi Panchayat of Bombay had become dysfunctional by the 1840s due to the unchecked actions of some of its leaders, and Jejeebhoy believed that securing government oversight of the new institution as trustee would benefit both its operations and also the Parsi community (*Correspondence, Deed, Bye-Laws, etc.*, 1849: 18–23). Jejeebhoy and the Parsi Panchayat were the major donors of the Institution. Jejeebhoy offered Rs. 300,000 and twenty shares of the Bank of Bengal from him and Lady Jamsetjee, and the Panchayat offered thirty-five shares of the same bank (*ibid.*; Wadia 1950: 5–8). In order to secure government support, however, the new institution could not contravene British policy in India that the imperial government remain neutral in Indian religious matters. Consequently, Jejeebhoy and the Parsi Panchayat drafted by-laws that made the institution a non-denominational entity (*Correspondence, Deed, Bye-Laws, etc.*, 1849: 89–102). The Institution reflected the Parsis' accommodation to modernity and a Western-style educational system in India. The Indian notables' contributions to educational institutions during the nineteenth century were pivotal in educating a new generation of Indians who would emerge as Indian social reformers. The Institution also marked a major achievement in British and Indian relations. At a time when the concept of state involvement or regulation of private entities was foreign both in India and elsewhere, Jejeebhoy's efforts to involve the government as trustee of the Institution utilized collaboration to secure benefit for Indians. Jejeebhoy and the Parsis had reached an accommodation with the imperial power on sharing authority within an institution dedicated to the interests of Indians. Jejeebhoy made a claim on the British for justice, and tailored Western-style philanthropy to the educational requirements of Indians.

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy's charity substantially affected the political landscape of Bombay and Western India. His large-scale charity projects provided a viable entrée for Indians to British officialdom. Soon after his proposal for the hospital project, in 1842 Jejeebhoy entered into negotiations with the British to build a reservoir and waterworks to relieve the shortage of water at Poona. Jejeebhoy defrayed the majority of costs of the project to the sum of Rs. 173,050. The Bombay government noted Jejeebhoy's involvement in the

project to be one of the ‘most useful acts’ of a ‘discriminating and munificent charity’ (Mody 1959: 144–7). Jejeebhoy and the Indian notables successfully accommodated themselves to the new political environment by fashioning a style of interaction with the British that identified with the civic interest and the Empire as a whole. The tremendous and unprecedented largesse Jejeebhoy and later other Indians lavished on charitable projects could not be ignored in its humanitarian and political importance. It was a striking example of Indian commitment to participate in humanitarian charity and established authoritative relations with the British. Notwithstanding the fact that Jejeebhoy did not achieve the role of full and equal partner alongside the British in the decision-making for the hospital, the British welcomed Indian charity. Indian charity formed a valuable contribution to civic society, confirmed values they associated with British civilization, and was a socializing tool.

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy’s charity also activated the charitable and civic efforts of Indians, substantially changing the physical landscape of Indian cities. By the mid-nineteenth century, Indian public charity assumed epic proportions in Bombay, and the Indian burgers of various cities competed in their conspicuous charity. The history of the University of Bombay singularly illustrates how the wealthy of Bombay matched and raised each other in the financing and construction of the academic buildings (Tikekar 1957). The residents of Bombay, Poona, Surat, Madras and Calcutta competed with each other as to which center had the better medical, educational and other humanitarian facilities. The enthusiasm for charity clearly illustrates the sense of Indian community and motivations that went beyond a desire for political advancement alone. The sheer volume of charitable contribution transformed the nature of the civic culture. British officials could not but comment on the transformation of Indian cities and the sense of obligation they felt to contribute. Whereas British authority was not contested, Indians had begun to socialize the British, through charity, to share in a community of values, particularly in the urban setting.

The first Indian knight and baronet

In 1842 Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy became the first Indian knight in recognition by the British of his many acts of charity and public-spiritedness. The knighthood was the proof of both the culture of collaboration the British had effected in India and also Indian receptiveness to colonialism. In communication with George Lyall of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, Jejeebhoy held the knighthood as the validation of his charitable endeavors and the imperial experience in India:

My fellow countrymen will be the first to appreciate the unbounded goodness shown to me and will feel that Justice and Liberality to

India are no longer mere words of form but that they have a real and substantial meaning which has been explained and made manifest by you to them

(J.J. MSS, vol. 369: 129–30)

In appreciation of the knighthood, Jejeebhoy sent Queen Victoria four high-bred Arab horses and their handlers on his ship *Bombay* (Mody 1959: 103). And in recognition of the precedent the knighthood symbolized to Indians, the leading citizens of Bombay started a fund for the translation of books into English valued at Rs. 15,000 in Jejeebhoy's name (*Correspondence, Deed, Bye-Laws, etc.*, 1849: 1–15; Mody 1959: 101). Jejeebhoy's manner of acceptance of the title and furthermore the Indian community's receptivity to honors in general were pivotal to the rise of the honors system in India and the Empire. Honors were one of the incremental rewards the British doled out to inculcate and acknowledge colonial loyalty. The Indian response was equally crucial to the success of the honors system (Palsetia 2003: 55–75).

The Jejeebhoy knighthood was an unprecedented step in British–Indian relations. It placed Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in a special category of Indians in contact with colonialism. At the same time, the Jejeebhoy family sought to distinguish itself further. In 1853, the Jejeebhoy family, led by the efforts of Cursetjee Jejeebhoy, the eldest Jejeebhoy son, worked to secure Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy a hereditary honor. In communication with John Steward on 25 April 1842, Jejeebhoy had expressed a desire for a hereditary honor at the time of the knighthood: 'I should decidedly prefer a hereditary title. I am now pretty well on in years and it would be a great satisfaction for me to know that my son would share in the honors now conferred upon me' (J.J. MSS, vol. 369: 127f.). In March 1853 a plan emerged to detail Jejeebhoy's many philanthropic deeds in a well-crafted document, to be privately circulated in Britain (Palsetia 2003: 60). The Bombay civil servant James Williamson Ramsay wrote the memorandum on the charities of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy. The memorandum was a skillful propaganda document and the first program of publicity on behalf of a colonial subject that would largely shape the image and popular reputation of Jejeebhoy, including in the time after his death. It put forward Jejeebhoy as a loyal and philanthropic imperial subject and symbol of the successful British–Indian collaborative relationship. The subject matter of the memorandum was largely an overview of the self-made Parsi merchant's many charities with Jejeebhoy's early commercial activities downplayed.

In correspondence with Cursetjee Jejeebhoy, on 21 October 1854, Ramsay noted the memorandum's chief aim was to secure the hereditary honor and formed a 'short, pithy, telling statement of the public grounds of your father's claim to the further honor of his Sovereign' (J.J. MSS, vol. 382: 102–5). The plan to obtain the baronetcy was highly secretive, as the honor had to be seen to be earned and unsolicited, especially on the part of a

non-European subject. The Jejeebhoy family capitalized on the many socio-political contacts and linkages in India and Britain Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy had secured over the years. The efforts proved fruitful and on 24 May 1857, Queen Victoria conferred the first Indian baronetcy on Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (Mody 1959: 154). The extent to which the Jejeebhoy family desired the honor is clearly evident in the negotiations over the baronetcy, and reflects the lengths to which a segment of the Indian community accommodated itself to colonialism. Between 1856 and 1860, the Jejeebhoy family negotiated the conditions of the baronetcy and pledged to provide financial and property guarantees in support of the title to the value of £250,000, and accepted the English law of primogeniture succession to the baronetcy (Palsetia 2003: 63). The latter provision is noteworthy, as the Parsis vehemently resisted any application of English laws of succession, as they worked out a law code applicable to their community up to 1865 (Palsetia 2001: 197–226).

Imperial rites

The knighthood and baronetcy, arguably, secured Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy the reputation of being the first famous non-European colonial subject. The conferral of imperial titles on Indians and the elaboration of a system of imperial rites were perhaps the ultimate expression of the British promotion of a new colonial sociology and culture of loyalty in India. Imperial rites and events were important arenas of politics in empire. They would be elaborated greatly following the Indian Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, as the British sought to re-establish their authority in Indian society. Such rites as imperial assemblages and processions, celebrations, and support for patriotic symbols, including displays of loyalty to the Crown were largely imperial constructs. Imperial rites in India often imitated pre-British particularly Mughal ceremony and rites, such as the *darbar*, as an expression of the continuity of British rule in India from the past, while seeking to restructure authority under the British Crown (Cohn 1983: 165–209).

The acceptance by Indians of imperial honors and rites also reflected how deep-rooted imperial values in Indian political culture had become. As with charity, imperial rites present an important example of the role of colonials in culture production. The Indian desire for power, justice, and identity under colonialism also drove cultural change in India. As David Cannadine has noted, the creation of cultural bonds by Indians was intended to establish moral claims for support and just treatment from the British, based on the idea of similarity (Cannadine 2001: 56). The respect for imperial rites on the part of Indians also formed an expression of colonial identity under colonialism. Imperial rites presented Indians with the opportunity to show loyalty and to shape their political sensibilities. The significance of deference as a mode of political expression cannot be ignored in colonial India, and its impact on the evolution of Indian political culture. An important segment of

Indian society utilized imperial rites to foster British and Indian bonds. Imperial rites were a new vehicle for rendering deference and, equally, eliciting acknowledgment of a common ethical ground between ruler and ruled. A dual process was underway, whereby the British were seeking to socialize Indians into adopting imperial norms and, concomitantly, Indian notables were communicating to the British their adherence to these norms and their entitlement to all the privileges associated with public leadership.

Indian-initiated rites in empire are particularly significant to note: they distinguish how Indians perceived the importance of ritual activity from the rulers. Indian response to imperial rites begins with the social occasion. Social liberality and hospitality were the lubrication of social recognition under colonialism, as Indians emulated British social etiquette. Jejeebhoy executed many lavish social entertainments, which were milestones in Bombay society. Whereas the colonial social gathering has the reputation of being a colorful diversion, considerable significance underlay the occasion. Social gatherings, which were later to develop into grander imperial celebrations and rites, were significant episodes in breaking the barriers between Indians and the British, and formed the nascent forums of socio-political interaction. Jejeebhoy's entertainments, moreover, served the dual purpose of building imperial-colonial bonds and educating Indians to the advantages of British-Indian social intercourse. There is indication in the literature that Jejeebhoy deliberately aimed to utilize the social gathering and British-Indian contact as a modernizing trend within traditional society. At one lavish function in March 1840, in honor of Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert, Jejeebhoy raised the profile of Indian women, as Jejeebhoy's wife Avabai and her female guests were some of the first Indian women to participate in a public entertainment, leading the *Bombay Times* of 10 March 1840 to describe the occasion as 'a red-letter day in Indian social custom.'

Rites associated with the British monarchy and royalty are particularly noteworthy, as they personify the political and personal ties Indians made to colonialism. To some degree, the exalting of the British monarchy by Indians once again aimed to adjust imperial ideology to Indian requirements. Indians interpreted the royal idiom as a symbol of liberal empire and partook in rites to reflect this reality. For example, the leading Indian citizens of Bombay were the first colonial subjects to participate in coronation celebrations for Victoria in 1838 in the Empire. This actually caught the British in Bombay off-guard, and they had to plan celebrations accordingly (Resolution on the Coronation Celebrations for Queen, Bombay, 28 June 1838, in General Department 1838 13/440: 99). Whereas British celebrations on such rare occasions could serve to delineate the differences between the British and other races, the Indian notables determined to breach the barriers of difference through the enthusiastic embrace of imperial symbols. Colonial faith in the British monarchy as the symbol of an inclusive empire also survived shifts in the nature of late nineteenth-century colonialism, which was being

increasingly translated into an ideology of separateness and British superiority. Indian notables purposely attached to the symbol of monarchy an inclusive and progressive mantle, as the progress of Indians as a whole under colonialism was best served by a benevolent and far-sighted British rule, and their efforts were to guide it wherever possible along this course. At the same time, Indians also made more personal attachments to the British monarchy and royalty. There are many examples of how Parsis and other Indians were passionate and romantic royalists. Such examples as prayers at Parsi fire temples for Victoria and for her family's health and safety, and the translation of Victoria's highland journals and 'God Save the Queen' into Indian languages clearly went beyond token displays of loyalty or calculations for material gain, and represent a far-reaching dialogue between Indians and imperial ideology in the public culture (Karaka, vol. 2, 1884: 283-6).

Indian receptivity to honors and imperial rites marked a significant evolution in the Indian response to the opportunities and values under colonialism. The baronetcy plan and the accommodations the Jejeebhoy family made towards the title reflect the significant imperial pressures and stipulations Indians accepted as obligatory for advancement under colonialism. The Indian urban notables' cooperation with the British and initiation of imperial rites furthermore entailed an extensive adoption of imperial norms and values. Indian acceptance of imperial norms and values influenced the public culture and compelled British acknowledgment of the important place of Indians within the civic political arena.

The contribution Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy had made to the evolution of Bombay civic culture is clearly evident in the many tributes the citizens of Bombay and the Empire paid to him. In 1856, in recognition of the distinction Jejeebhoy had brought to Indians, the citizens of Bombay and around the Empire financed the creation of a marble statue of him to be housed in the Town Hall; the first major public tribute to an Indian by the citizens of Bombay (from 24 June to August 1856, the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Statue Committee recorded subscriptions coming from India, Britain and China to be Rs. 47,705, 15 paise and 4 pies, General Department 1857 86/379: 47-64). Out of regard for Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited the studio of the Italian sculptor Baron Marochetti, entrusted with the statue commission (Mody 1959: 151). Following his death on 15 April 1859, the reformist *Rast Goftar* newspaper of 17 April 1859 eulogized Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and his significance:

But the profusion and cosmopolitan turn of his charities are not more to be admired than the definitiveness of object and singleness of purpose with which those charities were directed. His hospitals, rest houses, water works, causeways, bridges, the numerous religious and educational institutions and endowments will point to posterity

the man whom Providence selected for the dispensation of substantial good to a large portion of the human race.

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Conclusion

In the first half of the nineteenth century Indian urban notables had accepted both the political and cultural influence of the British rulers. Indian public culture clearly bore the stamp of its creation under colonial circumstances and power. Indian accommodation to British norms, however, did not reflect an abandonment of Indian social and cultural concerns or a total embrace of imperial objectives. Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and the Indian urban notables of the first half of the nineteenth century facilitated both their positions and the rise of Bombay as the premier city of Western India. Jejeebhoy called upon a historical pattern of Indian cultural accommodation to foreign influences, not least of all those that he gleaned as a Parsi, to tailor British idioms to basic Indian requirements. The public culture that emerged in India from the first half of the nineteenth century in many respects served Indian requirements of stability, non-violence, and political authority. Significantly, the conservative and lawful political culture that the Indian notables fostered continued to commend itself to Indians, as loyalty and deference became values which the next generation of educated Indians employed when they initially mounted challenges to British colonialism. Indian nationalism emerged as a by-product of British–Indian collaboration, and the non-violent and non-communal, if anti-imperialist, foundations of Indian composite nationalism could be said to bear the stamp of the political culture of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy's time.

Notes

- 1 Collaboration or accommodation to the changing structures of political authority in India has a long history. Since Mughal times, clans, groups, and various interests from warriors to merchants have accommodated themselves to new political regimes and realities, foremost in the interest of the preservation of identity. Colonialism presented a new and more dominant hegemony than had perhaps been experienced previously in India. At the same time, the 'choices' for Indians under colonialism were similar to those in previous epochs: to resist and revolt and risk being defeated and in perpetual conflict, to withdraw from the political scene and largely be marginalized, or to collaborate and cooperate with colonialism. Collaboration, furthermore, involved a spectrum of responses or 'a continuum of intermediate attitudes' between subordination and revolt, from tolerance of the new reality to full cooperation. See also, Sarkar 1984: 273–4; Haynes and Prakash 1991.
- 2 I have chosen to spell Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy as represented on the documents bearing his signature and contemporary references to him. I utilize his surname in the text of the article.

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CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHORITY AMONG PARSIS IN BRITISH INDIA

John R. Hinnells

This chapter looks at the changing patterns of religious authority during the social transformation of the early nineteenth century in Bombay Presidency. There are several words with overlapping meanings – authority, power, influence, leadership – each having either religious or secular connotations – or both. By both authority and power I mean in this context the ability to effect change or determine policies; influence may indicate the standing to affect authority; leadership is normally an ability to inspire others through charismatic personality, or in the religious sphere through respect for an individual's devotional life or scholarly attainment.

Sasanian Iran was noted for its law books and sophisticated codes with clear lines of authority in which the king was at the pinnacle of power and a powerful chief priest oversaw religious matters.¹ However, we know little about the authority structure of the Zoroastrian community in the transition period after the first arrival of the early Parsi settlers in India until the early fifteenth century. It was then that Changa Asa, the (lay) leader of the community in Navsari, organized the transfer of the Iranshah fire from remote Bansda to Navsari. This was a sacred fire consecrated soon after arrival in India as an act of thanksgiving for their safe arrival and settlement and was known as the King of Iran, 'Iranshah' – in exile. Changa Asa also arranged for a Parsi, Nariman Hoshang, to visit Iran with a series of religious questions for the Zoroastrians in Yazd: thus started in 1478 the first of a series of *Revayats*, letters of advice from Iranian priestly leaders, which terminated after the 26th *Revayat* in 1773. Changa Asa and his son are said to have been thought of almost as kings in Navsari (Vajifdar 1974: 23–4). *Dastur* (= High Priest) Meherji Rana was recognized as the senior *dastur* from approximately 1578 following his visit to the court of the great king and noted syncretist Akbar. Meherji Rana appears to have impressed Akbar with his account of Zoroastrianism, for which the emperor granted him land in

Navsari (Besania 1993; Modi 1903). Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Parsis in Gujarat were agriculturalists and craftsmen. But in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when many Parsis migrated to cosmopolitan Bombay, which was emerging as a major commercial center, and fortunes were made through trade, the question of authority became difficult.

From the early days in Bombay a Panchayet was formed to oversee community matters. A Panchayet was a traditional form of community governance, theoretically by five (*punch*) chosen leaders. We do not know the exact date of its formation in Bombay but it is generally assumed it was in the early days of Parsi settlement, though it was not formally established by Government until 1787 (Davar 1949; Modi 1930). Until the 1830s its authority was respected. Perhaps the main aim of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) was to ensure that, in moving from the tight social structure of villages, migrants did not desert community ideals. Indeed, if anything, the BPP was stricter in enforcing monogamy (and making provision for the divorced wife) and excluding Hindu practices, than was observed in the rural areas. This was done at least partly to show the British that Parsis had a family value system as honorable as theirs. The fear was that individuals who achieved considerable economic success might consider themselves free from conventional social restrictions. The BPP was therefore involved in both religious and social matters and imposed punishments such as humiliation, requiring public apology, or Parsis could be made outcasts.²

These measures appear to have been reasonably effective until the 1830s, when respected BPP leaders resigned because they thought some of the *nouveau riche* on the Panchayet, which included Jamsetji Jijibhoy (hereafter Sir JJ), were ignoring the blatant flouting of the values by some of their friends who were, for example, openly taking a second wife. Protests began to appear in the press, notably by 'Q in the corner', alias Cursetji Maneckji, and an anonymous publication, the *Kholas-i-Panchayet*, which it was later discovered had been written by Sir JJ, tracing the failings of the Panchayet from 1823 to the 1840s (Davar 1949).

The BPP complained that many Parsis were going over their heads and appearing in British courts, so in 1832 the Panchayet urged the Government to give them more power, but this time, unlike in 1787, they sought this in vain. Instead Government pressed the community to produce its own laws on marriage, divorce and inheritance and introduced in 1865 a Parsi matrimonial court, consisting of appointed Parsis but overseen by an English judge to ensure compliance with the law (though the Parsi Law Association had begun to draw up guidelines in 1855). The British did not wish to get involved in family law but preferred that each community draft its own laws and preside over them. Thereafter the importance of the BPP declined, until in the twentieth century it became an administrative body overseeing the distribution of charitable funds. By establishing his Parsi Benevolent Institution (1849)

Sir JJ in a real sense took over the BPP, naming most Punchayet Trustees as his Trustees, and within a couple of years the two Trust funds were merged and Sir JJ was declared President of the unified body for life.

Anjuman meetings/communal assemblies

First it will be helpful to give a brief account of Anjuman meetings. An Anjuman was an assembly which met for various communal occasions, for example that of the *uthumna* (memorial) ceremony of an important person or to appoint a *dastur*. A Samast Anjuman was a bigger occasion: for example in the eighteenth century such an Anjuman met to approve a man taking a second wife. The Anjumans could function as a legislative assembly and therefore such Anjuman meetings were more authoritative than most Parsi histories have acknowledged. In the nineteenth century the Punchayet board was increased from the theoretical 5 to 12 or 18 members appointed by Government from a list of 24 nominees given by the community, including some priests. When the larger number was assembled it was known as a Samast Punchayet. Who had the authority to call such meetings and the extent of their powers is a theme which will recur in this chapter. Preliminary work for such meetings was undertaken by a Punchayet which also meted out punishment to offenders. The Punchayet administered the rules, and their workers were the *nasarsalas* who functioned not only at funerals but also in conveying messages about meetings and of *bundobusts* – agreements made at Anjuman meetings. If someone was to be summoned to the Punchayet then a Punchayet priest was sent (Modi 1930: 3).

Long-standing priestly authority tensions: Sanjanas and Bhagarias

From an early date Gujarati Parsis were divided into five priestly divisions or *panthaks* within which a group of priests had sole responsibility for liturgies. This originally simple agreement (the date of its introduction is unknown, probably thirteenth century – Modi 1905: 15) became complicated with migration across boundaries which caused much tension concerning religious rights. Navsari was the region of the Bhagarias (= ‘sharers’, i.e. of the income of liturgies in the Navsari *panthak*). When the Iranshah fire was taken to Navsari in 1516 CE, its Sanjana *mobeds* moved also.³ The original agreement was that the Sanjanas undertook duties relating to Iranshah and the Bhagarias continued with their existing responsibilities to families. At the request of *behdins* (laity) some of the Sanjana priests began undertaking some Bhagaria duties, leading to riots and physical violence which spread to Surat. The implications will be discussed later so it is worth giving some details. During this conflict in Surat a priest went to the *hakim*, or local Muslim judge, who imprisoned one *behdin* and had eleven others whipped. When the priests saw

their treatment they pleaded for the freedom of the *behdins*, so they in turn were whipped. The *behdins*, seeing that there had been such hurt on both sides, came to an agreement and a notice was promulgated on 8 February 1687 saying that *behdins* could have their rites performed by the priest of their choice. Later the Bhagarias objected again to the agreement and appealed to a local judge to suspend it. But not all Bhagarias agreed and a second Bhagaria group was formed, led by Minochehr Homji.⁴ The dispute continued until 1733, when Iranshah was moved to fortified Surat because of a Maratha raid on Navsari. It remained in Surat until 1736, but the disputes broke out again and so in 1740 it was taken to the town of Bulsar, and eventually to the small community of Udwada. Why Udwada was chosen is not clear. The legend goes that it was taken there in glory, but it seems rather it was moved in the middle of the night because of the powerful and not wholly charitable nature of one Shahpur Shamra, or the 'Black Shahpur' (Hodivala 1927: 195–351). Udwada was in Sanjana territory so that responsibility for its care was undisputed. Perhaps also to avoid dispute, the two priests from leading families who carried the fire were both made *dasturs*, which is why Udwada to this day has two *dasturs* associated with just one Atash Bahram.⁵

More Atash Bahrams

The consecration of the second Atash Bahram at Navsari in 1765, this time under Bhagaria care, has been documented (Cereti 1991; Patel 1906: 11).⁶ The third Atash Bahram was consecrated in Bombay by Mulla Kaus Rustom Jalal in 1783 according to Kadmi⁷ rites; in 1794 he handed the dasturship over to his son, Mulla Firoze, and he went to Deccan Hyderabad. In 1768 father and 10 year old son had gone from their family home in Broach to Iran, sent by a wealthy Surat Parsi, Dhunjisha Munjishah, to study Zoroastrian law and in particular the calendar. Munjishah had been interested in calendar issues raised by the visit of two Iranian Zoroastrians, Mobed Jamasp Velayati and a *behdin* Jamshid (1720 and 1736 respectively). They had raised the question of the discrepancy between the Iranian and the Parsi calendar. This started a furious debate in Surat, and in 1767 the arguments grew so fierce that the 'traditionalist' Parsis complained to the court at Broach where the Nawab referred the question to the Punchayets of Navsari and Surat. They asserted the Parsi or Shenshai ('royal') tradition and the Nawab told all Punchayets, including Bombay, to follow this practice. This is an early example of Parsis referring religious disputes to external authorities. On arrival in Iran Kaus Jalal left his son, Peshotan, for four years in Yazd studying the sacred literature and liturgies (*Avesta*, *Yasna*, *Vendidad*) and he underwent the *navar* (first priestly 'ordination') ceremony in 1771. Father and son later went to Isfahan where Peshotan studied Arabic and Persian. One Muslim teacher is said to have been so impressed by Peshotan's

intelligence that he gave him the title 'Feroze [Victorious] Mulla'. After three years in Isfahan they moved to Shiraz and stayed there for three years, where it is said they managed to persuade the court to release the Zoroastrians from the *jizya* (poll tax). They proceeded to Baghdad for 18 months where Peshotan studied Turkish and tradition has it that the Caliph of Baghdad was so impressed with father and son that he conferred on both the title of 'Mulla'; thereafter Peshotan took the name of Mulla Feroze. Since such powers of a caliphate had long since lapsed there are clearly some legendary elements to the narrative (Paymaster 1931).

When Kaus Jalal and Peshotan returned from Iran, convinced of the correctness of the Iranian calendar, Munjishah, who by then had moved to Bombay, called them there and Kaus Jalal oversaw the consecration of the Dadyseth Atash Bahram in 1783 and was made its first *dastur* (PP. I: 63, for 29 Sept. and Patel 1906: 15). Kaus Jalal handed the dasturship to Peshotan in 1794 and he held this post until his death in 1830. His language skills earned him high respect in Bombay so that he was appointed to the Punchayet in 1794. At a meeting of the elders of the Punchayet in 1818 it was announced that henceforth the *naujote* (initiation) of illegitimate children could only be performed with the permission of the BPP; among the 13 signatories Dastur Mulla Feroze stood second.⁸ At an Anjuman meeting on 18 October, 1823 it was resolved that on public occasions Dastur JamaspAsa would have the first chair, Dastur Mulla Feroze the second and the third was to be held by Dastur Sanjana. Thus, in Bombay a sequence of priestly authority and honor was laid down among the *dasturs* as it had been in Navsari, but the order in Bombay was different. Mulla Feroze published the *Desatir* in 1818, which he and his father had brought from Isfahan: it was originally proclaimed as a long lost 'authentic' mystical Zoroastrian text, but later seen to be a relatively modern Sufi text with some Zoroastrian elements. He was respected by the British also. Mountstuart Elphinstone appointed him to the earliest education body established in Bombay, namely the Native School and School Book Society, in 1820. From 1824 to 1830 he was paid by the British to write the *George Nama* in 40 Persian couplets, an account of the British in India up to the reign of King George. The Calendar controversy flared again in 1826, and he was involved in that. His Iranian studies and relations with the British gave him a position of popular authority (Paymaster 1931).

At Surat there are two Atash Bahrams: one is Kadmi (followers of the Iranian calendar), the other Bhagaria. Their consecration was disputed. Two persons each wanted to consecrate an Atash Bahram. The debate was, first, whether or not it was permissible to have two Atash Bahrams in one place, and second, as to which was to be built first. One was built by the widow of Jamshedji N. Mody, a relative of the influential family of Jamsetji and Hormusji Wadia. Their plans had been drawn years earlier but they had difficulty in locating a site. In the meantime P. K. Vakil decided to build an Atash Bahram because he was ill and vowed to erect such a temple. The

court found in favour of Vakil but the Wadias appealed to the High Court in Surat where it was agreed that the Wadias and Mody's widow should build theirs first. The D. N. Mody Atash Bahram was consecrated on 19 November 1823 when it was estimated 20,000 people were present. The second, just over a week later, was the P. K. Vakil Atash Bahram which was consecrated according to Kadmi rites on 5 December (Patel 1906: 34–9; *PP*. I; 161f.). Again an external court was consulted in a religious matter.

The JamaspAsa lineage of priestly authority

For reasons that will become apparent it is important to consider the situation in Navsari. Dastur Meherji Rana is said to be a direct descendent of the first priest to come to Navsari, Kamdin Zarthosht. Note has already been taken of his recognition as leading *dastur* after his visit to Delhi (1578–9, Modi 1903). But there were other *dasturs* in Navsari. Sources refer to the three high priestly chairs of Navsari: the first place was taken by Dastur Meherji Rana, the second by Dastur Pahlān, and the third was held by the JamaspAsa lineage. This chapter focuses on the JamaspAsa lineage because it was the lineage which became central in Bombay and in Poona (for this lineage see above all Jamasp Ashana 1912, on which the following account is based).

The oldest ancestor of the JamaspAsa lineage for whom records exist was Ervad Ashaji Faredunji (b. 1659), a priest who was involved in the Sanjana/Bhagaria disputes in Navsari. The first to bear the title Dastur JamaspAsa was his youngest son, born in Navsari in 1693. Anjumans did not necessarily appoint the eldest son; it sometimes chose another son, brother or even an Acting Dastur as will be seen below. This reinforces the point concerning the authority of Anjuman meetings. JamaspAsa studied Persian, Sanskrit and astrology from a pundit, and in 1812 he went to Broach to study Avestan and Pahlavi under Dastur Jamshed Kamdin and later studied Arabic. He became well known in Broach literary circles. He used to read the *Shah Nama* for the Nawab, arousing the jealousy of the Maulvi, and in 1719 he returned to Navsari. He was controversial because he was prepared to translate Avestan texts into Gujarati for *behdins*, unlike his priestly contemporaries. Feeling isolated in conservative Navsari, he resolved to go to Delhi, but his father persuaded him to stay. In 1719 he wrote 11 questions to the Dasturs in Iran, thus generating the *Revayat* of JamaspAsa. He was also controversial for some of his opinions on calendar issues and for arguing that *behdins* should be able to study their religion, and even become *dasturs*. In 1721 Dastur Jamasp Velayati arrived from Kerman bringing the answers to JamaspAsa's questions. He noted the discrepancy between the Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrian calendars but did not make the subject widely known, for there were already disputes concerning funerals.⁹ Velayati took three students into his confidence: a *dastur* from Broach, Dastur Kumana of Surat and Dastur

JamaspAsa, all of whom studied with him. Because he considered Dastur JamaspAsa to be the most scholarly he gave him his Pahlavi *Nirangistan*. He was appointed *dastur* in 1734 and was considered to be the leading *dastur* of Navsari at that time, teaching several other *dasturs* including three of the Sanjana and two of the Meherji Rana lineages. He enjoyed writing *Monajats* and Sanskrit *Shlokas*. He made a large collection of manuscripts and said in his will that they were not to be dispersed among his three sons but that the whole collection should go to the most scholarly of them. Unfortunately the brothers disagreed and the collection was dispersed among them.

He taught his son, Jamsetji Jamaspji, who became widely respected as a linguist, studying Avestan, Pahlavi, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. After his father's death in 1753 Jamsetji Jamaspji sought the dasturship, but the Anjuman paid his application no heed. Thereafter he often conflicted with the Anjuman, notably when he objected to the consecration of the Navsari Atash Bahram, saying that there should not be two Atash Bahrams in a radius of 125 miles. He refused to attend the consecration of the Atash Bahram, even though he was promised the dasturship in return. He agreed to give a talk on fire afterwards, for which he was honored. His reputation spread, so much so that when the Gaekwad visited Navsari he asked Jamshedji to recite the *Shah Nama* to him, but he was criticized by jealous pundits who challenged the Gaekwad for sitting next to someone who ate flesh and drank alcohol. Jamsetji in turn challenged them to a debate, which he won, and they recognized his authority. He traveled to Bombay on foot in 1781 and stayed as the guest of Bomanji L. Wadia and wrote five books. Many *agiarys* (Gujarati: *agiary* means 'house of fire') including the Maneckji Seth Agiary in Bombay, were consecrated under his directions. He had problems with the Anjuman because he was 'independently minded'.

The first of the Poona JamaspAsa line, Dastur Bomanji Jamsetji, was appointed in 1816 and held the position for nine years. Most Poona *dasturs* were raised in Navsari before taking the dasturship in the Deccan, and most studied the classical languages. One, Sadar [= senior] Dastur Noshirwan Jamasp II (1818–84), actively supported the British during the so-called 'Mutiny' (or as some call it 'The first war of Indian Independence') and he was decorated by the British for his services. Others of this lineage joined the services of the Nizam. But the one with the outstanding reputation for scholarship was Sirdar Khan Bahadur Shams-ul-ulama Dr Hoshang Jamasp (1833–1908) who was Professor at the Deccan College in Poona for 18 years and was awarded a Ph.D. from Vienna in 1886.

For the purposes of this chapter it is the Bombay line of JamaspAsas which is the most relevant. The first was Dastur Khurshedji Jamshedji who started for Bombay from Navsari in 1801. There was then no Shenshai *dastur* in Bombay. Khurshedji was appointed *dastur* in 1812 and served for 28 years, for 11 of which he was an *Akabar* ('Manager') of the Punchayet (*PP*. I: 218 for 24 May 1829). He was the only priest authorized by the Punchayet to

solemnize second marriages once the Anjuman had given approval (Dastur Mulla Feroze had a similar role for the Kadmis). In the 1820s Dastur Khorshedji J. JamaspAsa (1747–1829) was ranked by the British as the Parsi equivalent of the leaders of the Muslim and Hindu communities and was therefore given a monthly honorarium of Rs. 30 in acknowledgment of his standing (Modi 1930: 9.II.III.10). There was then no Atash Bahram, so his son Rustomji was based in the Banaji Dar-i Mihr. The JamaspAsas were considered the senior Shenshai *dasturs* of Bombay, but whereas most Dasturs' authority 'lies within the walls' of their temple, the JamaspAsas were Anjuman *dasturs*.

It is worth looking in a little more detail at the debate between the Sanjanas of the Wadia Atash Bahram and the JamaspAsas at the Anjuman Atash Bahram. In 1803 there was a major conflagration in the Fort area of Bombay, which destroyed many Parsi homes and temples. Hundreds were forced to live elsewhere: a number settled in Chandan Wadi and the need for a Dar-i Mihr became evident. This was built by H. B. Wadia and consecrated in 1805, with two members of the Sanjana priestly family taking part in the consecration. Wadia left instructions in his will that this fire temple was to be made into an Atash Bahram and it was consecrated in 1830; Edulji Dorabji Sanjana was made *dastur* over it. He was a scholar of Avestan and Pahlavi and a firm opponent of the Kadmis, rejecting vigorously the teaching of Dastur Mulla Feroze. He was caught up in much controversy. He argued that because the Wadia Atash Bahram and that in Navsari were of equal status boys need not go to Navsari for their priestly initiations (*navar/maratab*) because this could be done in the new Bombay temple. This directly questioned the traditional religious authority of Navsari. His proposal was rejected by the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman (PP. I: 243 for 4 January 1832). On a tour of Gujarat, while distributing largesse in 1850, Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy asked for Navsari's agreement to the proposal, but even Sir JJ, on such an influential occasion, was refused (PP. I: 545, 1 May). Sanjana proceeded to initiate boys into *navar/maratab* in Bombay, which caused major disputes.

Sanjana was involved in another dispute. The priests who worked for Dastur Sanjana in the new Wadia Atash Bahram assumed that the money left by worshippers at the *boi* ceremonies (the 'feeding' of the fire with sandalwood five times daily) would be shared between all, as in Navsari. Sanjana refused and kept this money for himself. The dispute eventually went to court in 1883, which found in favour of the priests (Kanga 1932: 111–43). But Sanjana remained obdurate and some priests left the Atash Bahram and moved to the Dadyseth Atash Bahram. In 1884 Sanjana and his Trustees took two leading priests to court and accused them and 13 others of violence. The two priests were imprisoned. It was assumed that the motive was to discredit Sanjana's priestly opponents. The brilliant lawyer and famed politician, Sir Pherozechah Mehta, appeared for the priests; those imprisoned

were released, fined and the 13 were warned (see *PP.* III: 121, 15 June). The priests were made even angrier.

There was evidently tension between Dastur JamaspAsa and Dastur Sanjana, as followers of the two *Dasturs* each spread rumours about the other to the extent that the brother of Dastur Sanjana was sent to prison for libel in 1869 (*PP.* II: 307, 30 Nov.). In 1882 Sanjana issued a handbill condemning Dastur JamaspAsa for performing the *naujotes* of nine children of *juddin* (non-Zoroastrian) mothers (*PP.* III: 41, 26 June).

It then appears that Dastur JamaspAsa, the Anjuman Dastur, and the disenchanting Bhagaria priests from the Wadia Atash Bahram, joined forces to establish a Bhagaria temple where the priests could perform ceremonies. At a meeting among 'the elders' in Bombay in 1884 a petition, dated 11 April 1884, was drawn up with 241 signatories, first among which was J. M. JamaspAsa, calling for the establishment of a temporary agiary; a permanent Dar-i Mihr was consecrated in 1887 and plans were made for making it into an Atash Bahram. The Bhagarseth Anjuman in Navsari acceded to the request for *alat* (sacred items for use in the consecration) and sent a new *varasya* (sacred bull kept in large temples for its hair and *nirang* – urine used for purification). They could not use the Kadmi *varasya* because they did not accept the validity of Kadmi rites of consecration (Kanga 1932: 179–244).

The Wadia Atash Bahram Trustees and their *dastur* were unhappy at this development, and in order to counter it planned their own Dar-i Mihr in Navsari to gain influence there. This matter went to court in Navsari, there, and on subsequent appeal to the Baroda High Court, the judgment found against the Wadia Trustees.¹⁰ The plans to consecrate the Anjuman Atash Bahram faced difficulties. Dastur Sanjana wrote a pamphlet saying that it was wrong to have two Bhagaria Atash Bahrams so near, and he argued that the plague then raging in Bombay was a divine punishment for these plans.¹¹ With only one newspaper (*Satya Mitra*) supporting the new Atash Bahram, fund raising was difficult. Dastur JamaspAsa persuaded various individuals to fund certain parts of the temple: Dadabhoy N. Contractor funded a hall above the sanctuary and Mobed Jamshed S. Kookadar, a close associate of Dastur JamaspAsa, donated a hall for the performance of ceremonies.¹² Others funded the frontage, portico and verandah. On Sunday 17 October 1897 it was finally opened and the fire was moved from the Dar-i Mihr to the Atash Bahram sanctuary. Dastur Jamaspji led the thanksgiving *jashan* ceremony and delivered a lecture after the first *boi* ceremony, and in 1898 he was appointed *dastur* of the Anjuman Atash Bahram.¹³ Patel (1906: 479, 489–93) quotes the *Times of India*, that whereas all other temples had been built and owned by individuals, a whole community or Anjuman now did so: 'for the first time . . . a fire temple has been established which they can now call their own'. The *Times of India* comments on a picture of 'Dustor Jamaspjee Minocherji, now recognized as the high priest of the entire community . . .' and the article later repeats the description 'the head priest of the

Parsees . . .'.¹⁴ However, the controversies were not at an end. In 1903 Dastur Kaikhusrroo Jamaspji performed the *naujote* of Suzanne Brière, prior to her becoming Mrs Tata, triggering the law case discussed by Mitra Sharafi in this volume.

Originally the Managing Trustees had intended that *mobeds* of other panthaks, and followers of Minocher Homji, should be allowed to perform ceremonies in the Anjuman Atash, but the Bhagaria priests protested and took advice from a distinguished Parsi lawyer who prepared a case. But he persuaded them to settle out of court and asked M. P. Khareghat to arbitrate, which he did in 1912. He found in favour of the Bhagarias, a position supported by the Bhagaria Anjuman at Navsari and confirmed by the Bombay Court on 12 July 1915.¹⁵

Religious issues and secular courts

One striking feature of this narrative is the use of Muslim, Hindu or British courts, to settle religious questions; this process long predated the 1908 Bombay and the 1925 Rangoon case involving Bella. I have avoided mentioning the 1908 case because of Mitra Sharafi's chapter in this book (see also Palsetia 2001: 226–51). But it is noteworthy how the *obiter dicta* in that case have been seen as authoritative not only in Independent India but even in the diaspora, for example when a Christian, Joseph Petersen, converted to Zoroastrianism in a well-publicized event in Chicago in 1983 (Hinnells 2005: 478–83). The first example I have found of resorting to a secular court is in 1788 when the PUNCHAYET complained in the Mayor's court that the heirs of Maneckji Seth were not administering their trusts properly with the result that the PUNCHAYET sought the court's permission to take over the trusts. Their appeal was upheld but the heirs appealed to the Governor in Council, who annulled the previous judgment; the PUNCHAYET in its turn appealed to the King in Council, who found in favour of the Seths in 1797 (Modi 1930: 5.13). As we have seen, resort to external courts was taken regarding the calendar, the building of a second Atash Bahram in Surat and the Anjuman Atash Bahram, even concerning which priests could perform what ceremonies in the Atash Bahram. A further case was triggered when the Wadias, who had built and renovated the Atash Bahram at Udwada, closed a door leading from that Atash Bahram to the Sir D. M. Petit Dar-i Mihr; this ultimately raised questions of ownership of the Atash Bahram. The *mobeds* argued that the ownership of the Atash Bahram itself was not in the hands of the Wadias, but that it was theirs. It resulted in a long court battle in 1903, where the final judgment was that no one could own the Atash Bahram, but the priests had the duty of care, and the Anjuman of Udwada had overall management of it (*PP*. III: 860f., 20 October). The secular courts were resorted to because there was no clear line of religious authority despite the theory of the seniority of the respective *dasturs*' chairs at Navsari and Bombay.

Changing geographical loci of authority – the increasing religious authority of Bombay

In 1749 disputes arose in Bombay concerning questions about the positioning of the legs of a corpse: should they be laid straight or in the bent meditative position? This was referred to the Navsari Anjuman, although it said that they should be laid out straight, Bombay, in this instance, ignored Navsari and allowed people to choose: this is said to have caused unhappiness back in Navsari (Modi 1930: 5.3–5). Until 1755 priests in Bombay had to go to Navsari on foot to have a *bareshtnum* (9-day purification ceremony). Bombay sought permission to consecrate a *varasya* for the *bareshtnum* and for higher liturgical ceremonies and wrote to Navsari on 7 September 1776. The Navsari panthak simply sent a *varasya* and did not answer the question of permission to consecrate, but permission was granted in 1791 (Modi 1930: 5.7 and 6.1 respectively). The first *Nirangdin* (consecration of *nirang*) in Bombay was celebrated a year later (*PP*. I: 870). In 1777 there was an unusually high number of deaths in Bombay because of the plague, so the Bombay Punchayet wrote to the Navsari Anjuman seeking permission to build a wall around the *dokhma* to lay the dead bodies within a larger space. Permission was granted (*PP*. I; 55, 21 May). Hence until the end of the eighteenth century it can be argued that Navsari was seen as the authoritative priestly centre.

By 1820, however, Bombay was asserting its religious authority. On 7 July 1820 a petition was sent to Bombay from Bulsar concerning a priest who had taken a second wife who was already married. The BPP resolved that he be required to take the woman back to her husband and that if this was not done he, his family, the priest who performed the second marriage and everyone else involved should be made an outcaste. The Bulsar Anjuman protested that among them second marriages were accepted, but the Punchayet threatened action in a European court, so everyone involved had to take a *nahn* purificatory ceremony and recite the *Patet* prayer as signs of penitence (Modi 1930: 7.7). In 1824 there were signs of jealousy between Bombay and Navsari Anjumans. In a letter dated 17 January 1824 the *dasturs* at Udwarda refused to perform the *bareshtnums* of Godavra *mobeds* who had migrated to Bombay, because so many were migrating to the metropolis, and they feared loss of standing and income. The *mobeds* appealed to the Navsari Anjuman. It was first agreed that they should be given the *bareshtnum* in Navsari – but not in Bombay. But the Navsari Anjuman finally refused, thereby removing the possibility of the *mobeds* performing ceremonies and thus denying them income. The final solution was that the *bareshtnum* was performed at Surat; the priests then made their way to Bombay on foot and administered the *bareshtnum* to other Godavra *mobeds* in Bombay. In 1826 a Dar-i Mihr was consecrated for them in Bombay. As Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy later renovated this Dar-i Mihr it was known both as the Godavra or the Sir JJ Agiary (Modi 1930: 9.IV).

Other events in 1824 also highlighted the increasing religious importance of Bombay. The *dastur* of Kalyan was seen attending a dance programme and an explanation was called for. He protested that he did not have the *bareshnum* so he had done nothing wrong. He also protested that he had been compelled to go to the dance. To this the Bombay Panchayet responded to the effect that if the priest had no *bareshnum*, then he was not a *dastur*. The outcome was that they required him to undergo the *bareshnum*, but not until six months had elapsed, depriving him of his income for that period. It is interesting that it was Bombay not Navsari which made that judgment (Modi 1930: 9.V.1). In the May of the same year, Parsis in Poona sought permission from the BPP to build a *dokhma* and a Dar-i Mihr; permission was granted on condition that the Bombay policy was followed, notably not to initiate the children of *juddin* mothers and not to eat meat on *hamkar* days. In 1826 a similar request was received from the Diu Anjuman: the same conditions were again laid down, together with the requirement that the legs of the deceased should be laid straight and not bent, as some Udwada and Navsari priests argued (Modi 1930: 9.V.2–7). Such was Bombay's authority that in December 1831 it was resolved that any *moted* who had his *navar* (priestly initiation) performed outside Bombay, was to be re-examined in Bombay before being allowed to practice there in order to ensure that they were properly trained. The following year Navsari at last gave permission for *navar* ceremonies to be performed in Bombay (Modi 1930: 10.VI.1–4), though in practice some priests, for example the present Dastur JamaspAsa, chose to have their *navar/maratab* performed in Navsari. One important step on the path to the increase of Bombay's authority was the huge conflagration in Surat in 1834. The charitable funds raised were lodged with the firm of Jamsetji Jijibhoy and Sons, but so much was collected that not all the money was needed and the surplus became the Surat Panchayet funds, overseen by the Trustees of the Panchayet in Bombay; thereafter – and down to the present – the Surat Trustees are not elected in that city but appointed from Bombay. All this indicates that by the 1830s in practice the seat of religious and communal authority had become the then relatively new cosmopolitan city of Bombay, just at the time that the Panchayet there was imploding.

Authority to discipline priests

The disciplining of priests, which has been a rarely discussed feature of Parsi religious authority, has in fact been more common than is generally appreciated. The example quoted above, of a *dastur* being required to undertake a fresh *bareshnum* after six months, is not unique. In May and June 1796, in three Samast Anjumans, it was decided that the priests who held the *bareshnum* could not drink toddy, even if they had prepared it themselves. If they were found to have broken this rule then no one was to give him a further *bareshnum*; he was to be forbidden to perform ceremonies and no one was to

make him welcome (Modi 1930: 6.I.8). A priest who took his children to a mosque was banned from working for a year (Modi 1930: 9.II.II.5). In 1830 an Anjuman meeting agreed a resolution that any *mobed* who initiated the child of a non-Parsi woman should be barred from the priesthood for the rest of his life (*PP.* I: 897, August 11; Modi 1930: 10.II.1). In May 1851 the priests of the Muncherji Seth Agiary were banned from entering Atash Bahrams or other *agiarys* because they participated in the Hindu festival of Holi. With the support of people living in that area they sought forgiveness and asked for a *bareshnum* so that they could resume their Zoroastrian activities: permission was granted (Modi 1930: 12.X.5). A dispute between Dastur K. Bejonji, *dastur* of the Kadmi Banaji Atash Bahram and a *boiwalla* (a priest who performs the five times daily ‘feeding’ of the sacred temple fire) was taken to court: this ruled that, as *dasturship* was not a position for life, if the managing trustees and *dastur* could not work together the latter could be dismissed; however, the court ruled against such a step in this instance because not all the managers had been consulted (*PP.* III: 410–13, 6 September). In 1897 Dastur Mulla Feroze was told that he must resign because he had performed the wedding ceremony of H. N. Wadia with a close relative (his father’s step-sister), which was illegal under the Parsi marriage act (*PP.* III: 658f., 14 November). My personal contacts tell me that one Dastur was asked to resign early in the twentieth century for indebtedness, fearing that this could result in dishonesty – though there was no imputation of actual dishonesty. In 1910 the Bhagarseth Anjuman met in Navsari to discuss whether Ervad Sohrabji Maneckji Dastur Meherji Rana could be permitted to undergo a *bareshnum* as he had traveled by sea when returning to Navsari from his position as Panthaki at Colombo (see the chapter by Choksy in this volume). The Anjuman concluded that he could not, as ‘they could not change long standing customs of venerable ancestors’ (*PP.* IV: 101, 14 December). When Dastur Kaikobad Adarbad of Poona performed Bella’s *naujote* in Rangoon in 1914, his Trustees insisted he apologize and promise not to do anything like that again, or be faced with a Samast Anjuman to rebuke him (*PP.* V: 10, 7 May). In contrast, a meeting of the Athornan Mandal, a group to represent the views and interests of priests, met in 1922 to discuss the wedding of R. D. Tata to Suzanne Brière and the subsequent *naujote* of their children by Dastur JamaspAsa. It was resolved that the case of Tata ‘should be considered a special one’ and no action was to be taken against the priests involved (*PP.* VI: 64, 28 January). In 1916 the Bhagarseth Anjuman in Navsari met to discuss the ‘misbehavior’ of Vada Dastur Kaikobad Dastur Meherji Rana; it was decided that he should go and live elsewhere for a period ‘to improve his behavior’. A priest was sent with him to report monthly and an Acting Dastur was appointed in the meantime (*PP.* V: 37, 14 October). Priests and even Dasturs were, therefore, subject to the authority of Anjuman meetings.

An illustration of the power of an Anjuman meeting, though this time not as a disciplinary institution, occurred in 1925. When the *varasya* died at

Udwada all higher liturgical ceremonies at the Atash Bahram were stopped until a new *varasya* could be consecrated, but the *dastur* could not consecrate one until the Anjuman had met to agree (*PP*. VI: 9, 9 November). There were clear, if unwritten, guidelines about conduct at such meetings. In 1937 the BPP convened a prayer meeting on the coronation of King George VI at the Wadia Atash Bahram, but when Dastur Rustom Sanjana demanded the congregation stand and recite a prayer he had composed (even though acting in his own Atash Bahram) there was much debate and several people, including Sir P. K. Sethna and R. A. Wadia, refused. Sanjana wrote a letter of resignation which the Trustees accepted (*PP*. VII, Pt 2: 365, 12 May). In 1942 when Dastur JamaspAsa and Dastur Framroze Bode, after performing the Bansda *naujotes*, attended a prayer meeting at the Wadia Atash Bahram for Allied success in the war there was uproar until they left and only then could the prayers begin (*PP*. VIII: 45, 6 September). Even *dasturs* could be excluded from a prayer meeting by those assembled if they were thought to have acted improperly.

Some aspects of secular authority

Having looked at priestly authority, a brief note is appropriate on secular authority, apart from the BPP. Jesse Palsetia has shown how JJ sought to exert influence on the British by establishing joint charitable projects (notably the hospital) to be seen to be working alongside the British (Palsetia 2005 and above). Sir JJ was not always successful, but another route he pursued was through lavish balls and dinners at his palatial residence to which leading British officials were invited. In 1822 the Governor Mountstuart Elphinstone was invited to his sons' weddings (*PP*. I: 159, 11 February); he held a ball for J.H. Crawford on his return to England (1824, *PP*. I: 183, 22 November); in 1836 he gave a ball for the wedding of two sons (*PP*. I: 287, 14 January); in 1840 the new Governor called on Sir JJ in his home and JJ then gave a ball in his honor (*PP*. I: 351, 29 January and 9 March); again in 1843 he gave a ball in honor of the new Governor (*PP*. I: 411, 6 February), as he did once more in 1849 (*PP*. I: 517, for 22 January). As his physical mobility decreased with age and his fame spread, the new Governors were wont to call on him at the start of their governorship (Lord Elphinstone 1854 *PP*. I: 628, 3 January), even in 1857 at the time of rising tensions before the 'Mutiny' (*PP*. I: 730, 19 June). Later, other Parsis followed this example, but such social prominence gave Sir JJ hitherto unrivalled influence and thereby the power to affect Government policy.

Sir JJ (I) was, as noted above, recognized head of the community but his immediate heir, Cursetji or Sir JJ (II), was not and the custom was only re-established with the election of Sir JJ (III) in 1877. Davar (1949: 55) gives no reason for this, but from reading Cursetji's letters in the Bombay Jijibhoy archive he seems to me to have been more interested in socializing with

upper-class British gentry with whom he identified, and with ordering numerous horses, buggies, cigars and large stocks of alcohol, than with community or social affairs.¹⁶ His later heirs were recognized as heads of the community at Anjumans on the occasion of the *uthumna* of the previous JJ, for example the recognition of Sir JJ (IV) 1898, and Sir JJ (V) in 1908 (*PP*. III: 701, 7 August and IV: 27f., 26 July respectively). But even holding such a position his authority was circumscribed. Thus in 1916 Sir JJ (V) called a Samast Anjuman to mourn the death of Sir Pherozechah Mehta without consulting fellow trustees. The day before it was due to be held, C. J. Readymoney Jr., J. B. Petit, J. J. Vimadlal, B. N. Gamadia and ten others summoned a meeting which was attended by an estimated 5,000 Parsis at the Dadyseth Atash Bahram. It was resolved not to recognize the following day's meeting as one called by the Anjuman, that it should not be put on the record of the BPP and that no resolutions were to be passed. It was stressed that this was not intended as any discourtesy to Mehta but as a protest at the independent action of Sir JJ. A letter was sent to Sir JJ saying that his action was intentionally insulting, illegal, unconventional and discourteous. One hour before his intended meeting crowds of Parsis filled the hall, verandah and spilled out on to the pavement, preventing Sir JJ from entering, forcing him to try to hold the meeting on the steps of the building: eventually he had to give up (*PP*. V: 16, 8 April). The authority of even a Sir JJ could not be taken for granted. Even though he was recognized as the head of the community he did not have the personal authority to call an Anjuman meeting. Sir JJ wrote a long letter arguing that as head of the community he did have the right to call such an Anjuman meeting. Desai (1977: 175–80) shows that the right to call Anjuman meetings thereafter became a matter of controversy. By the 1920s Sir JJ's status was declining and that of the Adenwallas, Readymoneys and M. P. Khareghat was increasing. In his obituary in *PP* (VII/383) Sir JJ (V) is described as 'very independent minded' – a character flaw which made him unpopular.

In 1921 there were widespread Parsi protests against the BPP's involvement in the welcome for the controversial visit of the Prince of Wales, the protesters arguing that the trustees had no right to claim to represent the community without calling an Anjuman meeting. The visit was so unpopular that there were three days of rioting and three Parsis were killed, many were injured and homes and sacred places attacked. The protests from the Parsis were not so much against the royal visit (unlike the Hindu and Muslim rioters) but against the BPP trustees acting unilaterally without a meeting and therefore without authority (*PP*. VI: 36f., 17 November).

In 1933 Sir Pheroze Sethna wanted to call an Anjuman meeting to condemn intermarriage. The trustees invited resolutions and speakers. Some people wanted to submit amendments to the resolutions but these were refused by the trustees who said that a clear yes or no vote to the resolutions was what was required. Legal counsel was taken, which advised that amendments

could be refused but also that any agreements were not authoritative or binding on the community (Desai 1977: 180–4, documents 371–6). Thus the long-standing tradition of the authority of the Anjuman was undermined by two issues: who had the right to call such a meeting and how the business was to be conducted.

Individual authority

It is worth noting that many community heroes did not carry authority within the community. Even the venerable Dadabhoy Naoroji held no office, although he was once used as an arbitrator in a religious conflict. But he had previously faced opposition for his reformist views: for example he published a booklet against the use of *nirang* (*PP* I: 595, 13 June) and Sir JJ (I) disapproved of Naoroji's early moves for female education. Even Sir JJ (I) was at times somewhat unpopular, despite his later saintly image: for example when he brought his ladies 'out' into wider society at a ball in his home. Similarly, though Pherozezshah Mehta was prominent in the Bombay Municipality and was even re-elected several times to the Governor's Legislative Council and referred to as 'Bombay's first citizen' (*PP*. IV: 61, 2 December), he nevertheless came bottom of the poll in the first Punchayet elections to be held following the 1908 law case, despite having been nominated by Sir JJ and seconded by Sir D. M. Petit. He received only 47 votes, whereas the third candidate received 137 (*PP*. IV: 28ff., 14 March, the election was not held until 1911). He clearly did not command the affection of many within the community. Other famed heroes also faced intense religious opposition; for example in 1922 a Parsi Cremation Society was started, Rs. 400,000 collected and a request was submitted to the Government for land. Those involved included most of the Tata family, the Petits and the famous scientist Homi Bhabha. There were widespread protests and the Government was urged to refuse the land, and when it was denied a thanksgiving *jashan* ceremony was performed at the Wadia Atash Bahram (*PP*. VI: 76, 24 July). Even some figures who are nowadays quoted as heroes and role models for the community lacked authority in their own day.

Conclusion

This overview indicates the somewhat chaotic nature of authority among the Parsis: the locus of 'power' has moved from the Punchayet, even from the Anjuman, to the law courts – Muslim, Hindu and British; it moved from the Navsari Panthak to Bombay, from family to family – from the Wadias to the JJ's to the Readymoneys and Adenwallas. Within the priestly lineages there were clear lines of authority directing which priest held the first, second or third chairs, but these were different between Navsari and Bombay. One of the strongest bodies of authority, not often commented on by Western

academics, was the Anjuman meeting. Even the *dastur* at Udwarda could not consecrate a new *varasya* without the prior meeting and agreement of an Anjuman. The Anjuman chose, and could dismiss or suspend, a *dastur* or priest. But there were differences of opinion on who had the authority to call Anjumans. For reasons of space this study has not raised the issue of individuals competing for power. For example, Mr Justice (Sir) Dinshaw Davar, having been elected for life to the BPP, publicly criticized families for giving charity to non-Parsis, saying they should keep it within the community. Was it mere coincidence that the Tatas had just, in 1908, given huge donations to facilitate scientific study among all India's communities (*PP*. IV: 21f., 26 May)? Though nowadays the Tatas are held up as heroes of the community, they were highly controversial for their marriages out of the community. The age-old foci of authority, particularly the BPP and the Anjuman meetings, have lost their authority and nothing has taken their place. Even in the days of their 'strength', their authority was such that people resorted to external, i.e. Hindu, Muslim or British, courts for judgments on religious issues. The contemporary community has no clear concept of authority; that was lost in the period 1830–1930. The problems began in the early days of settlement, when no clear line of authority was established after the migration from Iran, but became worse with the crumbling of authority in the nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 Christensen 1944: 97–178; Frye 1983: 287–338; Boyce 2000: 101–44.
- 2 Modi 1930: 7.9; Jeejeebhoy 1953; Dobbin 1972: 99–112; Palsetia 2001: 65–104; Stausberg 2002: 34–44.
- 3 Modi 1905: 44–5 but the date is debated; see Hodivala 1920: 18–36; Palsetia 2001: 22 accepts the date of c. 1492.
- 4 Kanga 1932: 22, 30–4; Paymaster 1954: 97–106; Cereti 1991: 103–11.
- 5 Or 'Cathedral Fire Temple' Hodivala 1927: ch. 12 and see the Obituary of Dastur K. Minocherji in B. B. Patel's *Parsi Prakash* [hereafter *PP*], VI: 109, May 16, 1923.
- 6 There is uncertainty concerning the name of the Atash Bahram. Popularly it has been known as Desai Cursetji's Atash Bahram because he took the lead in raising the funds which he administered before and after consecration. But the funds were raised from the Anjuman (the term here used in the sense of 'community'). The question of ownership led to a court case in 1891 (Kanga 1932: 77–8).
- 7 The Kadmis follow a different religious calendar which is intended to reflect the ancient Iranian calendar from which, they claim, their opponents the Shenshais have deviated.
- 8 At a Samast Anjuman held on 11 August 1830 it was resolved that in future *naujotes* of children born to parents who were not legally married would not be performed.
- 9 Specifically whether the *padan* (mouth cover as worn by the priest tending the fire) should be tied on the corpse and whether the legs should be straight or bent (in the meditating position); see p. 112.
- 10 Another example of a religious dispute taken to a secular court, see Patel 1906: 334.

- 11 Despite their names the Sanjanas were Bhagarias (*PP.* III: 636, 1 June 1897); for Sanjana's letter see Kanga 1932: 318–21.
- 12 Popular tradition relates that he funded this by a miracle of finding a gold bar. In the twentieth century he has become a popular saintly figure whose prayers are thought to work miracles.
- 13 For the opening see *PP.* III: 650ff., 17 October.
- 14 See also Modi 1930: 9.II.II.x.
- 15 Suit no. 22 (Kanga 1932: 111–480; *PP.* V: 87, 9 August).
- 16 See the following volumes in the JJ archive in Bombay University Library: 360, 366, 368 and 371.

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BOMBAY PARSI MERCHANTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

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There is an elementary aim at the heart of this essay. It is to understand the relationship between Parsi entrepreneurs and 'community' in Bombay in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We will situate this process in a concrete historical period: that of a colonized economy in western India, and we hope to understand the social and economic behavior of Parsi entrepreneurs and its impact on their business activity. The relationship between Parsi merchants and institutions of charity also engages our attention. The chapter concludes with an examination of the relevance of the concept of 'community' for understanding Parsi enterprise. But before we venture into these areas, let us explore how the world of scholarship has perceived Parsis and their history over the years. This will also enable us to situate our narrative in the larger history of writings on them. The chapter is based on unpublished and published sources.¹

In spite of their small numbers, throughout the past few centuries the Parsis of India have remained a subject of interest for travelers and scholars from various parts of the world. A 1989 survey of published literature on them lists as many as 275 books and articles in the European languages alone (Hinnells 1980: 100). Apart from studies of a general nature, it mentions writings on their early history and features work on pre-1850 Bombay Parsis, biographies and scholarly works on their business and industry. The bibliography also has a considerable presence of treatises on the Zoroastrian religion, Parsi society and demography.

The Arabs were the earliest travelers to write about the Parsis in India. Among Europeans it was the French missionary Jordanus who first noticed them in Thana and Broach in 1322 (Hinnells 1980: 113). However, these early travelers did not illuminate the Parsi condition much. It was left to the British who came into close trading contact with them to provide more extensive accounts (Firby 1988: 95–114; Hinnells 1980: 113). Mention may

be made here of the writings of the missionaries E. Terry and H. Lord who wrote on them after their visit to Surat in 1620 (Firby 1988, cited in Hinnells 1980: 103). The first truly important account on the Parsis by a westerner was by the Frenchman A. H. Anquetil du Perron who came to India in 1755 in search of Zoroastrian and Hindu manuscripts (Firby 1988, cited in Hinnells 1980: 100–1). The mid-nineteenth century witnessed a considerable increase in writings on the community in India, a large part of which comes from the Parsis themselves. A higher standard of literacy and education, and the rise of an intelligentsia amongst them, surely contributed to this. The end of that century also saw the emergence of Parsi literature which over the years constructed a narrative espousing a ‘cluster of self attributes’ which, as Tanya Luhrmann puts it, ‘consistently represented the Parsis as the most westernized – and most worthily successful – community in India’ (Luhrmann 1996: 96). Throughout the twentieth century members of the community continued to write, and be written about, within India and without. In recent years the interest in them has grown.²

It is not possible here to critically evaluate the major writings on the Parsis across a century and more, but if one were to take a long-term view of the major historical writings on them it is possible to discern the recurrence of an orientation which also informed writings on the larger social history of India in this period. A critical review of such social history has been ably presented by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. According to him ‘the organizing principle that held sway throughout the last half of the nineteenth century was the paradigm of progression towards European civil and political society’, where ‘the guiding hand of the British led India on this path; education combined with “filtration” to the lower orders of society and implantation of such civil and political institutions as the British thought fit to give to India, slowly propelled India on this path to progress’. Aptly described as the ‘paradigm of the pupil’s progress’, it was a vital element in British bureaucratic thinking and one that profoundly influenced the way Indians viewed British rule and its impact (Bhattacharya 1982: 692). No less important was its consequence for studies on the development of intellectual activity in India. Connected with this paradigm was the approach that the recipients of western ideas and education also became protagonists for change in Indian society.

It may be noted here that a certain assumption is central to writings influenced by the above-mentioned paradigms. In understanding intellectual activity in the nineteenth century there is an implicit recognition of the fact that ‘western knowledge and philosophical notions were fundamental to the development of a critical attitude and cognition of reality’ (Panikkar 1984: 14). In view of this it would be instructive to look at some of the major historical writings on the Parsis in colonial India and thereafter. Dosabhoj Framjee Karaka, who rose to become Chairman of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, was, in the second half of the nineteenth century, a distinguished

exponent of the intellectual trend mentioned above. In what was to become an influential text, he averred that the 'effect of English education upon the Parsis generally will be to raise them still higher in the scale of civilization' (Karaka 1884, repr. 2002: 303). Towards the end of the nineteenth century the French writer Delphine Menant reminded her readers of the importance of European education for developing 'two remarkable qualities among the Parsis . . . [namely] their sociable disposition . . . and their growing taste for physical exercise' (Murzban 1996: 173). The resilience of this intellectual orientation is evident from the fact that three-quarters of a century later the German scholar Eckhard Kulke continued to hold European civilization on India's west coast responsible for the beginning of social transformation among the Parsis. English education was supposed to furnish Indians with the requisite 'know how' so that they could some day govern their nation themselves (Kulke 1974: 241, 249).

The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen an increase in writings on the Parsis. But the influence of the paradigm in question has not waned. A detailed study on the making and preservation of Parsi identity reiterates the tremendous influence of western education and ideas upon the Parsis and emphasizes how 'Parsi scholarship both emulated and acted in reaction to the western gaze' (Palsetia 2001a: 32). Echoes of this viewpoint can also be heard in a recent study on Parsi settlements in India, which holds English education responsible for the arrival of 'social and political consciousness' in the country (Kamerkar and Dhanjisha 2002: 157).

The seeming preoccupation with the role of Britain in the cultural development of India has been criticized (Bhattacharya 1982: 695). It has been argued that intellectuals in colonial India were influenced by traditional knowledge *as also* by a combination of both the western and the traditional. While Dayanand Saraswati who worked for reform in Punjab is an example of the former, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dadabhai Naoroji,³ Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Jawaharlal Nehru are examples of the latter. We are reminded that western influences did not automatically lead to 'progressive' social and political attitudes. Nor was it the case that traditional influences invariably led to conservative consciousness. It was not unknown for intellectuals, influenced by traditional knowledge, to have more advanced views on many social issues compared with those steeped in western cultural influences (Panikkar 1984: 15, 16, 20). For instance, Dayanand had no knowledge of European philosophy. His education did not go beyond study of the Vedas, Sanskrit grammar, Yoga and practical knowledge of India's condition acquired through extensive travel. Scholars have also deplored the intellectual tendency to underestimate the contribution of Indians and of institutions like the Students' Literary and Scientific Society⁴ in bringing about political and social transformation in colonial India.

From the 1950s onwards another paradigm gained currency in Indian sociological and historical writings. Those influenced by this approach saw

the experience of India during and after the nineteenth century as the 'modernization' of a traditional society. The concept was so wide in scope that it could virtually be synonymous with change (Bhattacharya 1982: 695–6). It also found a reflection in writings on the history of the Parsis. Kulke's book on the Parsis in India is a fine example of this. According to him social change in the developing countries was 'initiated and accelerated by economic, technological and administrative structures and values imported from Europe' (Kulke 1974: 9). The 'modernization' concept has been subjected to critical scrutiny. One such opinion found 'modernization' of the social and economic kind to be no different from colonialization (Chandra 1979). Pertinent questions have been raised about why the modernization of colonial countries failed to provide the benefits they brought to the metropolitan nations (Bhattacharya 1982: 695). The model of modernization failed to raise the important questions about the economic distance between nations, and it failed to focus on the internal social and economic disparities and the impact of colonial policies on colonized countries like India.

If we are to redress the situation and locate the history of the Parsis in the larger history of colonial rule in western India it is necessary to consider the changes which occurred in Parsi commercial and business activity in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the trading world of seventeenth century Surat a few Parsis could be found among the important guarantee brokers and ship-owning traders. The most well-known among them was Rustom Manock who was a banker and guarantee broker to Dutch, Portuguese and English trading houses. The other Parsi who figures prominently in Surat at this time is a merchant with the name Sorab (White 1995: 32–62). Surat's growth as a significant commercial center was due to the simultaneous growth in the mid-seventeenth century of three empires – the Safavids of Iran, Turkey's Ottoman empire and the Mughals in India. The simultaneous decline of these powers contributed to acute economic difficulties for Surat (Subramaniam 1981: 189). Attacks by the Marathas after the 1720s added to its woes. The merchants of the city also suffered from the increasing exactions of Mughal governors. The security offered by the East India Company and the promotion of a commercial ethos by it in Bombay caused Parsi merchants to shift to the city (White 1995: 162). Ashin Das Gupta has emphasized one other reason for their early departure. According to him they were a 'small community in Surat and could never hope to match the influence of the *baniyas*' in the very competitive trading world of that time (Das Gupta 2004: 334).

Meanwhile shipbuilding with its advantages to local shipper-traders received an impetus after Lowjee Nusserwanjee Wadia, a timber trader and foreman carpenter from Surat, settled in Bombay with his team of ten Parsi carpenters in 1736, at the behest of the British East India Company. By the middle of the eighteenth century Bombay had resumed its medieval trade connections with the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Malabar Coast.

Commercial links with East Africa, the Malacca Straits area and China followed in the decades thereafter (Forbes, I, 1861: 96). The English company was promoting trading concerns in the Far East. This offered opportunities to Indian merchants as agents for private English traders (White 1995: 171). In this new environment Parsi and other Indian guarantee brokers and traders witnessed a growth in their activities both inland and beyond Bombay's shores. The year 1756 saw two Parsi merchants, Hirji Jivanji Ready-money and his brother, leave for China. Before the year drew to a close Hirji had set up the first Parsi firm in Canton, which was then the only Chinese port open to foreign traders (Bulley 2000: 103).

By the end of the eighteenth century Bombay had become the premier commercial center of western India. From Basra, Muscat and other parts of the Persian Gulf came pearls, raw silk, carmenia wool, dates and rose water. Arabia was a source of coffee, gold, drugs and honey. Bombay ships also ferried spices, perfumes and sugar from Java, Sumatra and the Malacca Straits. Ties of trade also linked the eastern coast of Africa to Bombay. Madagascar, Mozambique and parts of the east coast provided ivory, slaves and drugs. Every year a large number of ships from Bombay carried raw cotton to China and returned with tea, sugar, porcelain, silk, nankins and a range of commercial items. Among the most important items of export from Bombay in the eighteenth century were 'Surat goods', pepper and 'cotton wool'. 'Surat goods' were piece-goods made in Broach, Jambusar and other towns of Gujarat. They were exported to Europe, England, the Persian Gulf, the Malay coast and the inland cities of India. Pepper, which came from Malabar, was exported to various parts of Europe. The year 1770 saw the commencement of raw cotton export to England and in 1790 Bombay was to ship nearly 422,000 lb of the commodity (Edwardes 1909: 412–15). However in the first quarter of the nineteenth century opium became the more important item of export to China.

In the business world of Bombay in our period merchants of the East India Company jostled for space with Parsis and members of the Gujarati trading communities. These included the Bhatias, Banias, Bohras, Khojas, Jains, Memons and Jews (Edwardes, I, 1909: 453). The presence of Konkani Muslim merchants has also been noticed (Siddiqi 1995: 198). The records on the subject also introduce us to Portuguese traders based in Goa or Daman (*Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Letterbooks* Vol. 349: 52). Until 1813, when the East India Company's monopoly on trade with India ended, there were also a few European agency houses trading in Bombay with a license. Since then and especially after 1833, which saw the end of the Company's monopoly in the China trade, as also, in a different sphere, a rise in the price of American cotton, there was a greater increase in the number of independent European merchants in Bombay (Dobbin 1972: 9–10). As far as commercial interactions with traders of other countries are concerned links between American and Indian traders were still in their early stages. Very rarely did French,

Danish and Dutch ships come to the city and the Portuguese trade with Bombay from Goa, Daman and Lisbon was very small (Edwardes 1909, 1: 41).

In this trading world the merchants of Bombay, 'fortified by their own traditions' and enriched by dealings first with the Company and then with European merchants, presided over vast business empires (Dobbin 1972: 9). By all accounts this early nineteenth-century community was dominated by a group that consisted largely of Parsis. Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they had a substantial presence in the commercial world of Bombay as timber merchants, shipbuilders, exporters of raw cotton and opium. Among the Parsis could also be found some of the biggest land-owners of Bombay. No less substantial was their activity as brokers to the British. They were also among the biggest shippers of their time. In the middle of the nineteenth century they pioneered the cotton mill industry. A significant feature of Parsi enterprise in the period is the continuous and substantial involvement in these enterprises of a small number of Parsi merchant families. The Wadia family dominated shipbuilding after 1736. Along with them families like Cama, Banaji, Dadabhoy, Readymoney, Jejeebhoy, Petit, Tata, Panday, Davar and Dadyseth had a pre-eminent position in shipping, banking, export of raw cotton, the trade in opium with China and, after the mid – nineteenth century, in the cotton mill industry.

But in the course of the nineteenth century Parsi merchants witnessed a change in their fortunes. The early nineteenth-century partnerships, which Europeans formed with them and other Indian traders for opium and banking, collapsed over a period of time. However, Parsi and Indian merchants continued to make large profits in the opium trade with China. But they were now increasingly subordinated to the larger international credit networks centered in Britain and America. Indian merchants, operating with short term high-interest credit, found it difficult to get bills of exchange⁵ at affordable prices. This made it problematic for them to repatriate their funds at a favorable rate of exchange. Further, the *consignment* system⁶ of trade became a low-cost source of Indian capital and commodities to European agency houses (Siddiqi 1995: 202–10). Parsi merchants suffered during the Opium War in the early 1840s and gradually they began to withdraw from the opium trade. Though a few big Parsi merchants remained in it till the early years of the twentieth century, the Parsis had lost the trade to Khoja and Baghdadi Jewish traders (Siddiqi 1995: 216). Parsi shipbuilding in Bombay also suffered following the withdrawal of Government support after the mid-nineteenth century. Earlier the British Navigation Acts of 1814 and 1823⁷ had militated against Indian navigation realizing its full potential. Parsis and other Indian shippers suffered decisively in the price war with 'free traders'⁸ from England and the west. But in the export of raw cotton, where Parsi firms were among the most powerful, they continued to be major participants till 1870. In the years that followed, with the exception of a few big

Parsi firms, the export trade in cotton became the exclusive preserve of European companies. However, Parsi and Indian firms continued to have a big presence in the inland trade in cotton. They also remained involved in complex financial arrangements with European firms involved in exporting India's agricultural and non-agricultural products.⁹ In the year 1856 Parsis pioneered the establishment of a cotton mill industry in Bombay, though by 1895 they had management and control over 22 of the 70 mills in Bombay (Rutnagur 1925: 54). Low factor costs contributed to a great extent to the industry remaining competitive in spite of unhelpful economic policies.¹⁰ Indian and Parsi businesses also suffered from an unhelpful British banking sector in India (Banerjee 1995: 286; Wadia 2002: 443, 453–4).

In the context of such a commercial atmosphere, we notice Parsi entrepreneurs participating in a variety of relations with merchants, both Indian and European, after the late eighteenth century. They appear as guarantee brokers¹¹ to European traders, absorbing risks of the latter. Hormasji Bomanji Wadia, who was a broker to Forbes Forbes and Company, is a good example of this (Wadia 1964: 163). We also see them involved as partners in long-distance trade. Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy joined hands with Motichand Amichand to export raw cotton and collaborate with Jardine Matheson and Company for the trade in opium. The partnerships of Indian merchants with Europeans were not always free of tension. But till the 1850s the tension was at a low level.

Partnerships were also present in the careers of those who pioneered Bombay's cotton mills. The team that Cowasjee Davar led to set up his first mill, the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company, had his brother Framjee and a relative Ardeshir Kaka as members. But significantly it also included two Gujaratis, two Englishmen, and a leading Maharashtrian citizen of Bombay; though Parsis held a majority of shares in this mill, the contribution of non-Parsis was not small. The two Englishmen alone took 13 percent of the shares (Mehta 1954: 14). A similar pattern can be seen in the team which set up the Oriental Spinning and Weaving Company under the leadership of M. N. Petit. How exactly such partnerships worked to the benefit of Parsi-promoted concerns is difficult to study, given the near-total absence of business records. But their usefulness to Parsi enterprise can be gauged from the fact that such partnerships endured. A 1927 study of Bombay's mill industry revealed the continued presence of such alliances in mills floated by major Parsi concerns (Rutnagur 1927: 75–6). Partnerships across communities existed in several concerns floated by merchants of other communities as well.

In this complex web of relations between Parsi, Indian and European merchants over a century, it is possible to locate cooperative business associations that Parsi merchants formed exclusively amongst themselves. We notice this entrepreneurial practice in 1804, when Pestonji Bomanjee Wadia intervened with the government of Bombay in favor of his co-religionist

Sorabjee Patell to enable him to retain the title of 'Patell' on the demise of his father (Patell 1876: 25). Again in the first half of the nineteenth century, when cotton traders such as the brothers Vicajee and Pestonjee Meherjee were transporting cotton from Berar (in Madhya Pradesh) to Bombay, another Parsi, Dadabhai N. Wadia, set up the first screw in the city for pressing the cotton into bales. And as seen earlier, another group of Parsi merchants led by Cowasjee N. Davar pioneered the mechanized spinning of yarn after 1856. Examples like these, where Parsi entrepreneurs worked together for common goals, can be multiplied. For instance Readymoney Jeejeebhoy and Company, which floated the Jubilee spinning mill in 1889, was a partnership between the successors of Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy and Cowasji J. Readymoney. Again, the mill owner K. M. Hiranameck had the support of 'Parsi investors' when he promoted the Queen Mills in 1883, followed by two other concerns, namely the Britannia and Star Mills in 1888 (Rutnagar 1927: 31). There is also the case of Jamshedjee Naigamwalla, who joined hands exclusively with Parsis to undertake large railway contracts for the British in the second half of the nineteenth century (Naigamwalla 1946: 24). That a strong sense of their own community prevailed among Parsi merchants in this period is also evident in photographs in a well-known compendium. Pictures of them sitting formally, or as part of a music club, or as a group of cycling enthusiasts, suggest a compelling story of their own (Darukhanawala 1939, 1: 92, 344, 400, 401, 431, 491).

Ties of community and friendship were strengthened by ties of family and kinship. There is a history of Parsi business families forming an extensive network of marital alliances in the nineteenth century. The Jeejeebhoy were related to the Petits, Wadias, Camas, Readymoneys and the family of Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy (Mody 1959: Genealogy). The Petit family was also related to the Pandays and the family of Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy (Edwardes 1923: 2, 3, 7; Wadia 2002: 454). Marriage had also brought together the families of Readymoney, Dadyseth and Banajee (Jehanghier 1890: 10–11) and united the Seth and Tata families in 1892, when J. N. Tata's son Ratan married Ardesir Seth's daughter Naja (Harris 1958: 262). Family relations built through marriage often led to business associations. F. N. Battliwala had as his early business partner his son-in-law Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (Mody 1959: 12). In the founding of his Oriental Shipping and Weaving Company in 1858 Manockjee Petit collaborated with, among others, his relatives through marriage Merwanjee Panday and Behramjee Jeejeebhoy (Rutnagar 1927: 10; Dobbin 1972: 20). Nevertheless, detailed research on the private papers, scarce as they are, of Parsi business families and firms is needed before we can illuminate this subject further.

Clearly, as well as coming together as friends, the prominent Parsi merchants of Bombay were also part of a kinship organization: what is significant is that its members were the most powerful Parsi merchants of the nineteenth century, who between them played a dominant role in all the

major business activities of western India for more than a century. These included the trades in timber, raw cotton, opium, shipbuilding, shipping, banking and the cotton mill industry. It would be interesting to unravel the precise financial implications that may have followed from these family relationships. For example, how did these networks affect capital accumulation? Did they reduce risks and transactional costs? Was there a reduction in competition between the different family concerns? Can one locate in the business world of nineteenth-century Bombay a loosely organized Parsi Company at work?

The Parsi commercial network of friends and relatives was large, and Bombay was its center in the nineteenth century. The network extended to the Indian countryside and various towns in western and eastern India. It also reached out to America, East Africa, Britain, China, Japan and ports in and around the Malacca Straits. A recent study of South Asian traders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Claude Markovits has described merchant networks as structures through which merchants, their employees and goods circulated. The networks also facilitated the secure circulation of market information and trade secrets and enabled the movement of credit at rates that are lower than those prevalent in the market. Such systems of credit are vital in a business environment – and so they were in nineteenth-century India – where ‘official’ institutions were neither sufficiently developed nor widely available. It may be mentioned here that the amount of lendable capital available with the Presidency Banks of which Indian business could avail itself in the second half of the nineteenth century was very limited. Community networks can also serve other functions. They are known to promote an atmosphere where transactions can be made on ‘the basis of that immaterial and hard to define commodity that is trust’ in the maintenance of which ties of community and kinship play a role (Markovits 2000: 25). Such networks can also facilitate travel, sharing of profits and the organization of apprenticeship; they also helped to mitigate competition between business groups (Roy 1997: 462).

A significant feature of nineteenth-century Parsi and Indian enterprise, pursued in an atmosphere of such networks of family and friends, is the importance of family firms. In such firms, the eldest male member of the family led and administered the concern through a subordinate group, composed of the other male members of the family. Female members were sometimes also included. The firm continued to function as long as the family remained a unit, with the rights of succession being acknowledged by law and traditional practices. Parsi firms like Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Sons and Company, Cursetjee Cowasjee and Company, etc. are representative of such enterprises. By the middle of the nineteenth century joint stock companies¹² arrived in the business world of Bombay. Nevertheless this did not result in a weakening of family networks. While the joint stock principle was adopted quite widely by Indian and Parsi merchants, especially in the cotton mill

industry after 1854, the new firms remained extensions of the older family firm. They were partnerships usually between members who were most frequently related by blood or marriage. Firms like Readymoney Jeejeebhoy and Company, Tata Sons and Company and Nowroji Wadia and Sons are good examples of these.

Between these family firms and the community they belonged to there was a relationship characterized by 'a very strong sense of responsibility for the well being of one's community fellows and an overt preference for dealing with them' (Brimmer 1955: 557). From the early nineteenth century and later, firms with such characteristics were evident among the enterprises promoted by the Parsis and other business communities. Some of the prominent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Parsi names in this regard are firms of families like Cama, Jejeebhoy, Dadabhoy, Readymoney, Petit, Tata, Wadia and Godrej. Such firms supported in varying degrees education, housing, health care, religious institutions, dharamshalas (rest houses), drinking water schemes, etc.

One is curious to know why family networks survived in Parsi business in spite of changes in the wider economic environment. Did it have something to do, as Shoji Ito has suggested, with 'some continuously present but unseen pressure' in the Indian economy (Ito 1966: 379)? Were these interconnected family networks and the coming together of Parsi merchants a way of protecting the economic interests of a tiny community under a colonial regime where business was conducted in a very competitive atmosphere?¹³ The intensity of competition in the economy of Bombay has been commented upon (Chandavarkar 1994: 69–70; Dobbin 1972: 155). The economic rivalry between Parsis and Khojas has been emphasized. It is significant that the riots that broke out in Bombay in 1851 and 1874 occurred primarily between these two communities (Chandavarkar 1994: 62). In these circumstances it is important to note that the Parsi merchants of Bombay, never large in size, saw themselves as part of a small community in Bombay. This self-perception of Bombay's leading Parsi businessmen is evident from an address to the Secretary of State in April 1874 in the aftermath of the Parsi-Muslim riots. The petitioners chose to describe themselves as an 'industrious' and 'prosperous people', who were 'few in number' and whose 'sole desire' was to 'obtain the protection of their lives, property and religion' (Judicial Department 1874: j 801/800–1). Clearly, there was enough in the economic world of Bombay in the second half of the nineteenth century which suggested to Parsi merchants the need to stick together.

Having explored Parsi merchant activity and the rise of a notion of the collective among them, we now take an overview of Parsi community formation and see what ramifications it had for economic affairs. By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the Parsis of Bombay had come to have a *punchayet* for regulating their religious, moral and civic life. Comprising largely the influential members of the community, at that time it served as their

principal forum of justice. Parsis who refused to accept its decisions were swiftly excommunicated. Such a situation continued till the middle of the eighteenth century when the *punchayet* found itself incapable of exercising its old authority. A need for change was especially evident after a dispute between the religious and lay members of the community. Overseen by the then government of Bombay a new *punchayet* was set up on January 1, 1787. Of its twelve members six were drawn from the priestly community while the rest belonged to the laity. The presence of names like Manekji Naorosji Wadia, Dadabhai Nassarwanji, Hirji Jivanji and Sorabji Mancherji in this *punchayet* is suggestive of the early influence that powerful Parsi merchants had in regulating the affairs of the community. The year 1818 saw an even greater number of major merchants in this premier body of the Parsis in Bombay (Karaka 1884, repr. 2002: 217–24). In these early years the *punchayet* dispensed social justice, curbed bigamy, as well as regulating marriage and funeral expenses and other aspects of community life (Desai 1977: 5–6). Over the years the influence of the *punchayet* declined. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it had lost many of its religious and social responsibilities. But by this period, it had contributed to the construction of an endogamous community, which lived by strict norms; for example, proscribing consumption of food prepared by non-Parsis and also marriage outside the community (Guha 1970b: 1935).

There were other factors, too, which promoted the sense of a collective among the Parsis. A brief survey of events that served as conjunctures for this purpose is essential. In the first half of the nineteenth century an emphatic coming together took place in protest against a government regulation of June 1832 which sanctioned the killing of stray dogs – creatures the Parsis held in reverence (Palsetia 2001b). Christian missionary activity also brought the Parsis together. Such activities after the 1830s were a recurrent source of tension and, as a result, a promoter of collective unity among the Parsis (Dobbin 1972: 59–63). As the century entered its second half, Indian Zoroastrians witnessed an increased awareness of their Iranian heritage. This culminated in the setting up of a fund in 1854 to help Zoroastrians in Iran (Dobbin 1972: 219; Palsetia 2001a: 169). No less important in community construction was the effort to develop a legal framework to regulate community life. The need for such an arrangement had grown, following a considerable decline in the *punchayet's* influence by 1838. As the century entered its last quarter, the feeling of being part of one community grew. During the Tower of Silence Case, in 1873, the Parsis of Bombay expressed their anger at failing to get redress from the law when buildings were constructed too close to their funeral ground (Dobbin 1972: 220–1). In February 1874 they came together again to express disapproval over the government blaming them for the Parsi–Muslim riots in Bombay that year (Dobbin 1972: 221; Palsetia 2001a: 189).

While the events summarized above mattered to the forging of collective

activity and identity formation, there were more enduring forces at work in the nineteenth-century history of the Parsis. It was a period of social and religious reformation, aided by an emergent Parsi journalism, which saw the Parsis accepting western education in a substantial way. Importantly, it was a period marked by private profits being invested in the creation of public assets, especially education, health and religious institutions. This activity was accompanied by Parsi merchants developing a strong sense of their own community. It was also a time when charitable institutions and trusts made their presence felt in the lives of the Parsis (Hinnells 1985). Trusts and charitable institutions have been seen primarily as a means for dispersing funds to the poor and needy, but these organizations may indeed have played a larger role as well. In this period, trusts were set up largely by groups of merchants, who may or may not have been related to one another. The effort for charity may also have been a first step in knitting together men of property and resources. A study of the composition of the Parsi *Punchayet* in 1823 and 1884 and the first trust set up by Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy in 1849 illuminates this fact. The very large number of such trusts in the nineteenth century is significant. It is reasonable to suggest that the promotion of charity and the development of 'cooperative' institutions may have aided the development of commercial networks.¹⁴ This integration of merchants, who headed family firms, with cultural processes was a matter of economic significance.

We have so far explored the connection between the Parsi community and its enterprise in the nineteenth century. In understanding the Parsi community, stratified as it was, it may be useful to understand that 'community' in the sense of a social organization was characterized by two features: a common social identity, and a regular involvement of family firms in the construction of 'cooperative' institutions. 'Community' promoted trust in business transactions, and thus avoided 'agency costs'. It also performed a variety of support functions, which could include mutual assistance and pooling of resources, while family firms and individual entrepreneurs aided community formation. However, there is a need to sound a note of caution. It would be incorrect to see 'community' as being necessarily cooperative. We have already seen that on the issue of social reform there was no unanimity of opinion among Parsi merchants. In commercial affairs, too, while networks of community and kinship did matter, in the highly competitive commercial environment of nineteenth-century Bombay business strategies were not circumscribed by boundaries of community alone. For instance, prominent mill owners such as M. N. Banaji and Nanabhai Jeejeebhoy opposed the proposals for factory reforms which Sorabji Bengallee made in 1878 (Dobbin 1972: 206-7). Bengallee was then a director of the Colaba Land & Mill Co.

It should also be mentioned that community structures that could promote Parsi economic interests did not necessarily *always* safeguard its members from financial losses. A large number of Parsi cotton merchants became insolvent after the crash in cotton prices in 1865. These included the big

firms of K. F. Parekh, B. H. Cama and S. N. Nanabhoy (Vicziány 1995: 195). The Bombay cotton mill industry also witnessed the poor performance of Parsi mills in this period (Rutnagur 1927: 25, 27, 31). Parsi mill owners also competed amongst themselves in what was a very competitive business environment.

Again, as commercial activity increased during the nineteenth century, in addition to business alliances within and across communities, alignments were also set up for representing specific commercial and professional demands from the colonial authorities. For instance the Bombay Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1836 to represent the concerns of traders. Though it was composed largely of Europeans in its early years, it did have important non-European merchants such as Nanabhai Davar and M. N. Petit as members.¹⁵ The Bombay Millowners' Association, which was set up in 1875, also had Parsi and non-Parsi mill owners as members. Further, over the nineteenth century, the earlier distinct business communities began to witness differentiation. This resulted in the rise of separate finance and banking groups as also groups which specialized in trade, industry etc. Clearly, the category of 'community' does not adequately illuminate the complex composition of the Parsi business world.

In conclusion, apart from colonial constraints the business world of the Parsis in the nineteenth century was also a very competitive one. Parsi merchants built their businesses around closely held family firms which were strengthened by networks of kinship and friends. Institutions of charity also brought merchants together. Parsi merchants also built diverse economic relations with entrepreneurs of other communities. It may be mentioned here that being guarantee brokers to European firms was part of this practice. 'Community' survived throughout this period and should therefore be a subject of study. The extent of its usefulness to Parsi enterprise is not always easy to assess. It will have varied according to time, personalities and their business strategies. 'Community' meant investments in the social sector and development of 'cooperative' institutions; though, it did not necessarily *always* imply cooperative behavior. We have also seen that the development of 'cooperative' institutions had economic implications. It was around such institutions that 'unities' were built and which assisted the Parsis in acting as a community – a phenomenon so vital in the economic success of a small community.

Our research suggests the need for a new approach to studying the business history of the Parsis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since financial relationships were built within and across communities, the history of Parsi enterprise needs to be explored in the context of the larger history of enterprise in western India. Insights gained from studying the history of other business communities like the Marwaris, the Khojas, the Bhatias and western agency houses need to be integrated with an intensive knowledge of Parsi business activity within the Indian subcontinent and territories

overseas. All this in turn must be situated in the broader economic history of colonial rule, recognizing the constraints it imposed on the growth of the Indian economy while giving limited opportunities to a section of India's entrepreneurs.

Notes

- 1 Records in the Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai on the Parsi–Muslim riots of 1874 and records on the Bombay Factories Commission of 1875 have been consulted. A few reports of the Bombay Millowners' Association have also been studied. Much benefit has been derived from reading the relevant volumes of the Jamsetjee *Jeejeebhoy Letterbooks* housed in the Mumbai University Library. A few Deeds of Trust set up by prominent Parsi families of Mumbai have been examined. The ample published material on the Parsis in the last 150 years and monographs on the economic and social history of western India have also been studied.
- 2 The major writings to appear in recent years include Bulley 2000; Palsetia 2001a; Godrej and Punthakey *Mistree* 2002; Das Gupta 2004; Kamerkar and Dhanjisha 2002; Mody 2005.
- 3 Apart from a formal education at the Elphinstone Institution, Dadabhai Naoroji derived much benefit from his association with a small group of Maharashtrian intellectuals, who pioneered social and economic reform in the nineteenth century. See Naik 2001.
- 4 The Students' Literary and Scientific Society, founded in Bombay in June 1848 at the Elphinstone Institution, was an early nineteenth-century cradle of critical ideas on British rule and contemporary Indian society. Though supported by Elphinstone professors, it was led by four distinguished Elphinstonians, Dadabhai Naoroji, Naoroji Furdunji, Sorabji Shapurji Bengallee and Bhau Daji. See Dobbin 1972.
- 5 Bills of exchange were financial instruments employed to make payments in the inland and overseas trade of India. They were used for borrowing and lending money as also for making remittances. Parsi merchants trading in opium with China in the nineteenth century preferred to have their earnings remitted through bills instead of bullion. Good bills were as good as paper money. Many Bombay merchants sought bills on the Court of Directors in London. They could be sold in India to persons wishing to make remittances to England.
- 6 Bombay merchants who did not have contacts or offices in foreign markets shipped their produce through agency houses or resident agents. The agents undertook all the effort for managing the exports. This permitted exporters, who did not have knowledge of foreign trade, who did not speak English or any other foreign language and who were not endowed with considerable capital of their own, to indulge in long-distance trade. The agency house suffered the risk of the voyage and took a portion of the profit.
- 7 These laws which remained in force till 1849 excluded ships built in India from European waters. Even during the period 1794 to 1816 when the laws were relaxed, Indian-built ships sailed under restricted conditions. For example they were prevented from carrying regular cargo on their return voyages. They could enter British ports only on the condition that their ships would be put up for sale there. See Guha 1970a.
- 8 In the early 1840s, Indian and Parsi shippers lost out to 'free-traders' from Europe, who ferried goods at rates much cheaper than those of the former. For instance,

- while the Parsi trader Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy would sail his ships to England at £7 to £9 per ton 'free-traders' could do so for £3 to £4 per ton. See Siddiqi 1995.
- 9 European firms served as agents for Indian merchants and companies who were involved in shipping to markets abroad. The commodities shipped included raw cotton, opium, grain, mill-made yarn and cloth. European agency houses also borrowed in a big way from Indian merchants. See Vicziany 1995; Banerjee 1982 and 1995.
 - 10 Colonial legislation on tariff set limits to the growth of the industry. For instance, in 1875 they had to suffer the imposition of a 5 percent duty on long stapled cotton imported into India. The duty was levied to discourage the production of fine yarn in the mills of Bombay. See *Report of the Bombay Millowners' Association for the years 1875 and 1875-76*. Again in 1878 and 1879 coarse cotton goods imported into India were exempted from duty. See Dutt 1976; Banerjee 1982 and 1995.
 - 11 Foreign merchants relied for money on the indigenous credit system in India. Prominent Parsi and other Indian merchants obtained commissions for procuring loans, the repayment of which they guaranteed.
 - 12 These were businesses whose capital was held in shares that could be traded and transferred by its owners. The Indian Companies Act of 1850 was the first step towards legally regulating joint stock enterprises. See Rungta 1970.
 - 13 *Report Of The Commissioners Appointed By The Governor of Bombay In Council To Inquire Into The Condition Of The Operatives In The Bombay Factories, And The Necessity Or Otherwise For The Passing Of A Factory Act*, 1875.
 - 14 The General Trust Deed (of 1884) of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet provides on page 1 the names of the Trustees in 1823 and 1884. They include the most successful Parsi merchants, landowners, shipbuilders and shippers of that time. The Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institution, set up on January 9, 1849, also brought together some of the biggest Parsi merchants of that era: Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Dadabhoy Pestonji (Wadia), Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy and Cursetjee Furdoonjee (Parekh).
 - 15 The Bombay Chamber of Commerce had 50 individual members. Of these 9 were Parsis, 3 Hindus, 1 Muslim and the rest were Europeans. See Sullivan 1937.

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MOURNING, PHILANTHROPY, AND M. M. BHOWNAGGREE'S ROAD TO PARLIAMENT¹

John McLeod

Sir Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownaggee (1851–1933) is usually remembered as the second Indian (and Parsi) to be elected to the British Parliament (McLeod forthcoming). Hinnells has reminded us that Bhownaggee was also a leader of the British Zoroastrian community (Hinnells 2005: 366–75, 340–52). This chapter examines yet another facet of Bhownaggee's life: several projects that he undertook to commemorate his deceased sister Ave. It touches on Parsi and British mourning practices of the late nineteenth century, and on philanthropy as both an element of mourning and a social and political statement. It argues that Ave's death, and the failure of one of the memorial projects, played roles in Bhownaggee's decision to make London his home rather than Bombay. At the same time, the expensive memorial projects helped pave the way for Bhownaggee's entry into Parliament.

I

In 1888, Bhownaggee's life seemed settled. He divided his time between his birthplace, Bombay,² where he was active in social and educational ventures, and his ancestral home, the princely state of Bhavnagar in Gujarat, where he was a cabinet minister. He had been married for sixteen years, and had two sons and a daughter.

Besides his three children, Bhownaggee was a surrogate father to his sister Awabai (1869–88), called Ave, whom he had raised since the death of their father when she was three years old (obituary of Ave, PP 23.11.1888). After passing examinations in English and General Knowledge at a Cambridge school, Ave made two visits to England. The second was in 1886, when she acted as Bhownaggee's companion during his work as an executive commissioner of the great Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London. Bhownaggee

was deeply attached to his sister, who was bright and well educated, and whom he regarded as the ideal modern Indian woman.

In November 1888, Ave died suddenly. Bhownaggree was devastated, and plunged into a profound depression that lasted for over six months (for example, MMB to G. Birdwood 30.11.1888 and 28.12.1888, both GBC 216/8). British and Parsi custom, however, ensured that he did not remain inactive. Scholars now recognize that Victorian British mourning, long regarded as overblown and unhealthy, actually provided a psychologically sound means of coping with loss (Jalland 2000: 242, 245). One of the elements of mourning was preserving the memory of the deceased, for example with such visible symbols as commemorative statuary and buildings (Jalland 2000: 245, 247; Curl 2000: 218–21).

By the late nineteenth century, anglicized Parsis like Bhownaggree could integrate this British practice of mourning through statues and buildings with an overlapping one from their own tradition. At the *uthamma*, a memorial ceremony held on the third day after the death of a Parsi, it is the custom for survivors to announce charitable gifts in memory of the deceased (Hinnells 1985/2000: 214). These gifts are part of the wider culture of Parsi charity, which operated on several levels in Bombay in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Benevolence is a central religious duty of Zoroastrianism, and Parsis have always generously supported both the religious life of their community, and the needy of all religions. At the same time, generous giving helped wealthy merchants replace priests as the accepted leaders of the Parsi community, and contributed to making charity a central feature of the Parsi identity (Hinnells 1985/2000 especially 209–10; Palsetia 2001: 36–45, 62–4, 334).

Many nineteenth-century Parsis saw ‘progressiveness’ as another defining characteristic of their community (Luhmann 1996, especially 96). They often united charity with progressiveness. For example, in keeping with the social reformers’ championing of female education, girls’ schools were major recipients of Parsi charity (Palsetia 2001: 142–52; Hinnells 1985/2000: 223–7). A major element of this progressiveness was social reform, which often meant remaking Indian society so that it would more resemble British society; in fact, for many Parsis, ‘social reform’ simply meant adopting British values (Palsetia 2001: 156). Partly because this kind of remodeling seemed most likely to occur if India remained under British rule, Parsi social reformers often supported colonial dominance (Palsetia 2001: 306–7). Indeed, many Parsis saw themselves as partners of the British in bringing ‘progress’ to India (Luhmann 1996: 115).

Donors often sincerely believed in the causes they supported (Hinnells 1985/2000: 238), but their gifts simultaneously served to demonstrate their desire ‘to participate in the leadership of Bombay society alongside the British’ (Palsetia 2001: 131). As Haynes notes in his study of merchants in the Gujarati city of Surat, the British responded favorably:

Through participation in the new forms of benevolence, a small set of . . . businessmen had won recognition as leaders of their community, as persons devoted to the development of their city, and as loyal members of the empire.

(Haynes 1987: 354)

Bhownaggee, for example, was sincerely committed to female education, medicine, and the British Empire. At the same time, through these causes he could demonstrate his support for British rule, which can only have helped his social and political prospects. As will be seen, whether by design or not, they also played a major part in his future career.

II

After Ave's death, Bhownaggee launched a number of memorial projects that reflect British mourning through commemoration of the dead, Parsi charitable support for progressive causes, and the demonstration of credentials to the British. Most of them associated Ave with a hallmark of Parsi progressiveness, female education. The first to come to fruition involved the Alexandra Native Girls' English Institution (now the Alexandra Girls' English Institution) in Bombay (see C[ursetjee] 1913; Palsetia 2001: 150–2). Most of this school's early administrators and students were Parsis, and Bhownaggee served as school secretary from 1873 to 1882. He, his parents, his wife, and Ave all appear on lists of donors to the school (AIR 1886–7, 1887–8, 1888–9). Now, Bhownaggee had an English mint strike an Awabai Bhownaggee Silver Medal, which was bestowed on the Alexandra students who scored the highest marks on the matriculation examinations of 1890, 1891, and 1892. In 1893, he set up an endowment of Rs 500 to fund the medal in perpetuity; the dies were handed over to the school, and ever since the medal has been given to the top graduating girl (AIR 1888–9, 1890–1, 1892–3, which gives a somewhat confused account).

On 25 November 1888, at Ave's memorial *uthamna*, Bhownaggee and his mother Cooverbai unveiled a much larger project. They announced that they were placing Rs 25,000 in a trust to build a hall in memory of Ave, complete with stained glass windows and a bust or statuette of the deceased. The trust would be administered by Bhownaggee and two Parsi friends, the journalist and administrator Dosabhai Framji Karaka and the businessman Darasha Ratanji Chichgur (PP 25.11.1888; MMB to G. Birdwood 28.12.1888, GBC 216/8, and 23.1.1889/7.2.1889, GBC 216/14; MMB to Bombay Branch, National Indian Association, ?3.1889, ED 9/1889 comp. 409). Within a short time, the Prince of Bhownaggee's ancestral home Bhavnagar had given an additional Rs 5,000 to the trust, and 25 other donors (mostly Parsis) a total of Rs 1,395 (printed list of donors, CUL classmark Pam.5.88.294).

Bhownaggee already knew where he wanted to build the hall. Following

the demolition of Bombay's city walls (1862–7), a row of imposing buildings was erected along Esplanade Road, on the open area west of the old walls. Bhownaggree had his eye on a vacant corner plot on Esplanade Road, across Napier Road from the Alexandra Institution (Minute by J. Monteath, 20.5.1889, ED 9/1889, comp. 409).³ In March 1889 he met with the governor of Bombay, Lord Reay. He wanted Reay's government to provide the land for the hall, and to match the trust's contribution to construction. Reay agreed to grant a site, though not necessarily the prime location that Bhownaggree desired. Government funding, however, would only be possible if the hall were more than a mere private memorial. Bhownaggree therefore told Reay that he intended the hall to be devoted to 'a series of lectures – on the basis of the University extension scheme in England' but specifically for women. The governor agreed that this might make a contribution possible (MMB to G. Birdwood 8.3.1889, GBC 216/14).

Bhownaggree's suggestion originated in a recent visit to Bombay by Adelaide Manning, general secretary of the National Indian Association in Aid of Social Progress and Education in India (Sutherland 2004). The aims of this London-based organization are summed up by its name. Under Manning's inspiration, the moribund Bombay branch of the NIA was revived and reorganized. Members of Bombay's British and Indian elite were enlisted as patrons and officeholders; Darasha Chichgur, already a member of the memorial hall trust, became secretary and treasurer, and Bhownaggree joined the branch's executive committee. The branch adopted a list of objects, which included 'Supervision and guidance of private schools of female education' and 'The diffusion of useful and entertaining knowledge by means of courses of lectures' (enclosures in D. Chichgur to J. Monteath 18.5.1889, ED 9/1889, comp. 409).

Bhownaggree was now suggesting that these two goals be merged with the memorial hall. After receiving the governor's favorable response, he persuaded the branch to add to its purposes 'instruction in various branches of knowledge by means of an organized system of Lectures to advanced female students who have passed the school-leaving age' (D. Chichgur to J. Monteath 18.5.1889, ED 9/1889, comp. 409). Bhownaggree and Chichgur then drew up a detailed scheme to build a hall that would be named after Ave and devoted principally to extension lectures. They estimated the cost of construction at Rs 60,000. Half of this would come from the trust. They assumed that the other half would come from the government of Bombay, which would also provide the land (MMB to Bombay Branch, NIA ?3.1889, and D. Chichgur to J. Monteath 18.5.1889, both ED 9/1889, comp. 409). Adelaide Manning undertook to raise further funds in England; she wrote a personal appeal for donations to 'the many who felt an affectionate interest in Ave,' enclosing printed materials about the project and a doggerel about Ave that begins 'Dear, bright, laughing, joyous Avé / Light of heart as any bird!' ([A. Manning] to friends, undated, CUL classmark Pam.5.88.294).

Unfortunately, Bombay's top educational officials were cool to the proposal. James Monteath, the education secretary, Theodore Cooke, the director of public instruction, and T. B. Kirkham, the educational inspector for the central division of Bombay, objected that the scheme was too rudimentary (for example, it did not explain how the hall would be maintained or its staff paid). Moreover, there was no evidence of widespread demand for extension lectures. They suggested that the NIA offer the lectures in an existing building, and only build a hall if they attracted sufficient students (Minute by J. Monteath 20.5.1889, T. Kirkham to J. Monteath 15.7.1889, and T. Cooke to J. Monteath 20.7.1889, all ED 9/1889, comp. 409).

Because of the hints of support that he had dropped at his meeting with Bhownagree, Reay could not dismiss the proposal so easily. He ordered Monteath to meet with Bhownagree, who agreed to write a detailed explanation of why continuation classes were desirable, and why they needed to be in their own building (Minute by J. Monteath 24.5.1889, ED 9/1889, comp. 409; two letters, MMB to J. Monteath 12.8.1889, ED 35/1891, comp. 231, and ED 9/1889, comp. 409). Bhownagree's justification reiterated that a separate hall was essential:

the new Institution should be free of all *direct* connection with any existing school, and because a sense of the permanency of the new Hall from the commencement as guaranteeing the permanency of the Lecture System should at once take hold of the Public mind.

With regard to the lecture scheme, he noted that 'even among the most advanced communities . . . , the average age of girls at the time of leaving school does not exceed fourteen or fifteen at the very outside' – after four or five years of education, girls left, either to get married or to ready themselves for marriage. Within a few years, they found themselves

unsuited to be effective helpmates to their educated husbands, or unable to maintain that intellectual equality on the race for which they started with their brothers and cousins at an early age. . . . I consider therefore that a scheme of instruction by means of Lectures, so arranged as to make the students free of strict control and discipline and leave a large choice of subjects, is urgently required.

Classes would be taught by 'local graduates and professionals' (who Bhownagree believed would volunteer their services free of charge) under the direction of 'an English lady educationist.'⁴ Women who passed final examinations would be issued certificates of proficiency in their fields, which Bhownagree suggested they might use to obtain jobs as teachers.

None of this, of course, had much relevance to the question of the actual demand for extension lectures. Moreover, Bhownagree's assertion, that

within two years the fees paid by the students would cover all of the hall's expenses, seemed wildly optimistic. Not surprisingly, after reviewing the scheme, the government of Bombay informed the NIA that no contribution to a hall could be considered until the extension lectures had proved themselves in an existing building (J. Monteath to D. Chichgur 16.9.1889, ED 9/1889, comp. 409).

III

Bhownaggree still wanted the public funding that would let him build a suitably impressive memorial to Ave. In October 1889, he was summoned to a meeting with Lord Reay, who 'told me he would have me give the money if I choose for a house to be erected for the Nurses' (MMB to G. Birdwood 24.10.1889, GBC 216/14).

The governor's suggestion associated the memorial project with the question of women and Western medicine in India, which linked two issues. The first was the need for female physicians to treat women who observed seclusion and did not see any men except close relatives (Balfour and Young 1929, especially 12–24). Only a minuscule number of patients fell into this category (Lal 1994: 39–48), but they included the wives of princes, wealthy merchants, and other elite men with whom people like Reay and Bhownaggree were in frequent contact. The campaign to supply female physicians quickly came to be regarded as 'progressive.' Not surprisingly, Parsis were in the forefront. Thus, in 1883 the Parsi philanthropist Sorabji Shapurji Bengalli joined an American businessman to establish the Medical Women for India Fund, which recruited women physicians from Britain to work in Indian hospitals. In 1886 another Parsi, Pestonjee Hormusjee Cama, built the Cama Hospital (now the Cama and Albless), which treated women and children and was staffed by the Fund's physicians (Balfour and Young 1929: 24–8).

The other issue was specific to large hospitals in cities like Bombay, where the work of assisting physicians and administering food and medicine to patients was originally carried out by male 'ward boys.' By the 1870s, presumably because of notions of sex roles associated with 'progress,' there was a growing feeling that trained female nurses should replace ward boys. In the mid-1880s, the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (JJ) and European General Hospitals in Bombay began training European women as nurses, and British nuns of the Anglican Sisterhood of All Saints began staffing some wards of the JJ. A proposal by the provincial surgeon-general William Moore to train Indian women met with no support in the Bombay government, however (GD 53/1890 and 54/1890, comp. 287 Parts I and II).

Lady Dufferin, whose husband became viceroy of India in 1884, took a strong interest in female medical care. In 1885, she established the National Association for the Supply of Female Medical Aid to the Women of India,

or Dufferin Fund, to bring British women physicians to India, train Indian women as physicians and nurses, and build hospitals and wards for women and children (Balfour and Young 1929; Lal 1994; Lang 2005). Despite reservations in some quarters (Lal 1994: 54–6, 59–60), many educated Indians regarded the Dufferin Fund as a worthwhile contribution to ‘progress.’ This was particularly true of Parsis, who often supported both female uplift and Western medicine (Hinnells 1985/2000: 223–7, Hinnells 1999b: 279–85, 292–5). Moreover, given that the Fund was the personal project of the vice-reine of India, Britons and elite Indians knew that supporting it would bring other dividends besides medical ones.

The Dufferin Fund inspired other projects involving women and medicine. In May 1889, the Prince of Bhavnagar offered the government of Bombay Rs 30,000 ‘for the training and maintenance of nurses at the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy [*sic*] Hospital or any of the Hospitals connected with the Grant Medical College’ (the medical school attached to the JJ) (Takhtsinhji of Bhavnagar to Lord Reay 20.5.1889, GD 80/1889, comp. 250). The offer was swiftly accepted, and the Prince then increased his donation to Rs 100,000. He suggested that the money be called the Lady Reay Fund for Nurses (Lord Reay to Takhtsinhji of Bhavnagar 3.5.1889 [i.e. 3.6.1889] and Takhtsinhji of Bhavnagar to Lord Reay 23.7.1889, both GD 80/1889, comp. 250). The flattered governor assented, and ordered William Cates, the new surgeon-general, to draw up a scheme for using the fund (GD 53/1890, comp. 287, Part I, and GD 80/1889).

Cates submitted his proposal in October 1889. It called for the Sisters of All Saints to train five Indian student nurses in the JJ Hospital. Cates noted one major difficulty: there was no accommodation for the students on the hospital grounds (W. Cates to General Department 15.10.1889, GD 53/1890, comp. 287, Part I). It was at this point that Reay suggested that Bhownagree use the memorial fund to build a student nurses’ home. Bhownagree was initially unsure, but in December 1889 the Bombay government secured his agreement to the scheme by promising Rs 15,000 if he gave his immediate assent.⁵ After some dithering, the government agreed to pay for the upkeep of the home (PWD 533/1890–97, comp. W4456/1890). The following month, Lady Reay laid the foundation stone of the home. She was accompanied by her husband, who observed that the home was

in commemoration of a distinguished lady of the Parsee community whose premature death we all deeply regret. The best memorial that Mr. Bhownagree [*sic*] could erect to his sister was a building in which native nurses should receive the instruction they require in their duties.

(Program for the foundation stone laying, ED 28/1890, comp. 97; see also *Bombay Gazette* 28.1.1890, PWD 533/1890–97, comp. W4456/1890; PP 7.1.1890)

The home, which was built over the Grant Medical College tennis court, was of two storeys and accommodated 20 nurses: on the ground floor, there were four two-woman bedrooms, with bathrooms and water closets, and a common room; the upper floor contained six bedrooms. An inscription in English and Gujarati, drafted by Bhownaggree, explained the home's connection with Ave. The total cost was Rs 30,699, of which the government paid Rs 15,000 and the memorial trust the other Rs 15,699 (PWD 533/1890-97, comp. W4456/1890).

In February 1891, the home was opened by Lady Harris, the wife of Lord Reay's successor as governor (PWD 533/1890-97, comp. W4456/1890), and the first class of nurses began their studies. The program lasted two years. The women were trained by the British nurses and the Sisters of All Saints at the JJ, whose salaries were paid by the Lady Reay Fund and the government. Until the nurses and sisters had acquired familiarity with the Marathi and Gujarati languages, training was conducted through interpreters. At the insistence of the trustees of the Lady Reay Fund (who included Bhownaggree), provision was made for the students to receive instruction in English (GD 53/1890, comp. 287, Part I, and GD 54/1890, comp. 287, Part II). All of the student nurses were housed in the Bhownaggree home.

IV

A pleased Bhownaggree put pictures of Ave and the home on his Christmas cards for 1891.⁶ Nevertheless, he still dreamed of a large memorial hall on Esplanade Road. A few weeks before the nurses' home opened, he presented a new idea to the governor, Lord Harris. Instead of extension lectures, he proposed that the hall be used as a reading room, study hall, and examination hall for the female students of the University of Bombay:

the hall will be a great boon, as it will afford them numerous facilities for the prosecution of their studies, not the least among which will be that freedom which they could not have in the rooms and corridors of their own colleges where they have necessarily to be in company with a very large number of boys.

(MMB to Lord Harris 30.1.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231)

Building the home had eaten up about half the money in the memorial trust. Bhownaggree used his own resources to bring the balance up to Rs 30,000, which he was willing to put towards the new project, provided the government again supplied the land and half the costs of construction.

Harris called this 'a handsome offer,' and recommended that his government meet the request for land and a financial contribution (Minute by Lord Harris 31.1.1891, PWD General 533/1890-97, comp. W4593/1890). The new scheme had the approval of William Wordsworth, the former principal of the

University's Elphinstone College, and Dugald Mackichan, principal of Wilson College (MMB to Lord Harris 30.1.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231). The director of public instruction for Bombay concurred that the number of women studying at the University was growing fast enough to justify a hall for their exclusive use (Director of Public Instruction to W. Lee-Warner 28.2.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231). With this backing, the project moved swiftly ahead. John Adams, the government's architectural executive engineer, drew up plans for a Rs 60,000 building on the Esplanade Road site, 94 by 74 feet in dimension, complete with a belfry (J. Adams to Superintending Engineer, Northern Division, 3.3.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231).

At this point, however, things began to unravel. First, the government of Bombay decided that the corner of Esplanade and Napier Roads was too valuable to waste on a Rs 60,000 building. Instead, a place two plots to the south on Esplanade Road was proposed, on the site now occupied by the Standard Chartered Bank building (ED 35/1891, comp. 231; PWD General 533/1890-97, comp. W4593/1890). Then, there were disagreements over the source of wages for the hall's staff and the funds for maintaining the building (ED 35/1891, comp. 231). In the end, the government and Bhownagree agreed that Bhownagree would make a further contribution of Rs 5,000, the government would be responsible for maintenance, and the University would pay the staff. In return, the University would receive all profits from renting out the hall to groups such as the National Indian Association (Educational Department to D. Macdonald 16.5.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231).

This, however, was unacceptable to the University, which (probably correctly) did not share Bhownagree's view that the only staff the hall would require would be an Indian matron and an under-servant, whose pay would total just Rs 300 a year. In August 1891 the University Syndics announced themselves to be 'of opinion that the scheme, as presently formulated, is not one which could be worked satisfactorily to the University, the Government, or the donors. . . .' They were willing 'to take charge of the Hall, as an experimental measure only, for three years,' but only if the government or Bhownagree provided money for 'an adequate establishment' of staff (D. Macdonald to W. Lee-Warner 18.8.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231). The government countered that it would give neither land nor money unless the University accepted responsibility for the wages of whatever number of staff turned out to be necessary, and in perpetuity rather than merely for three years (Director of Public Instruction to W. Lee-Warner 5.12.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231).

In December 1891, the government effectively washed its hands of the whole business when it informed Bhownagree that it was up to him to negotiate directly with the University regarding the terms on which the hall would be managed (Educational Department to MMB, 18.12.1891, ED 35/1891, comp. 231). Predictably, Bhownagree and the University were unable to find any common ground, and in November 1892 Bhownagree announced that

‘that project is as good as abandoned’ (MMB to G. Birdwood, 22.11.1892, GBC 216/33). Bhownaggree had had a fine marble bust of Ave carved for the hall by the British sculptor E. E. Geflowski. He symbolized the end of the hall project when he installed it in the nurses’ home instead (Giara 2000: 50).

V

A few weeks after Ave’s death, Bhownaggree wrote to a British friend of

the plan I have formed of being here in India for some time to see the completion of the Memorial Hall. . . . Then my work in this life will



Figure 8.1 Bust of Ave, originally in the Awabai Bhownaggree Home for Nurses and now outside the Office of the Matron, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Group of Hospitals, Mumbai (photograph by John McLeod).

be over, and I shall be free to leave this land to settle down in some quiet way in England.

(MMB to G. Birdwood 28.12.1888, GBC 216/8)

After all, India was where Ave had died, whereas in 1886 she and her brother had spent several very enjoyable months in England, traveling in the highest social circles in connection with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Bhownagree soon realized that permanently settling in England was impractical, but he began planning a lengthy visit to Europe (MMB to G. Birdwood 17.8.1889 and 26.9.1889, both GBC 216/14). His departure was delayed for over a year by a court case originating in factional politics in Bhavnagar (McLeod 2003), but in April 1891 he sailed from Bombay. After sightseeing in Italy, Austria, and Germany, he reached London, where he plunged into the social life that he enjoyed so much. He apparently also placed an order for a stained glass window for the memorial hall (J. Gazdar to W. Lee Warner, 2 Nov. 1891, ED, 35/1891, comp. 231), and it was probably during this stay that he commissioned Geflowski to carve the bust of Ave.⁷

While in London, Bhownagree became involved in a new endeavor. In 1887, Queen Victoria had celebrated her Golden Jubilee. To mark the occasion, her eldest son, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), established the Imperial Institute, a museum and information center devoted to the British Empire. The architect T. E. Collcutt designed a magnificent building, and construction began on the South Kensington site now occupied by the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Golant 1984).

From the beginning, the Institute was plagued by financial troubles (Golant 1984: 12), and by 1891 there was a strong possibility that it might never be finished. Bhownagree's patron the Prince of Bhavnagar, however, was skilled in earning British goodwill, as for example when he established the Lady Reay Fund. When Bhownagree left for England, the Prince 'desired me to act for him in any matter for the interests of India where his co-operation might be appreciated, e.g. the Imperial Institute, etc.' (MMB to G. Birdwood 14.4.1891, GBC 216/33). After he reached London, Bhownagree took part in various activities connected with the Institute (MMB to G. Birdwood 30.3.1892, 4.5.[1892], 5.6.[1892], 20.6.[1892], all GBC 216/33).

As prospects for a hall in Bombay grew dimmer, Bhownagree began to think of diverting part of the memorial fund to the Imperial Institute. After all, he was a firm believer in the British Empire, and throughout his public life was favorable to schemes that would tighten the bonds between Britain and its overseas possessions. With its goals of putting the Empire on display and providing information for businessmen, would-be emigrants, and the general public, the Institute was just such a scheme. The Institute was furthermore the personal project of the Prince of Wales, and supporting it in its difficulty could only strengthen Bhownagree's position in high society. Though unfinished, Collcutt's building was already a London landmark, and

if Bhownaggree could find some way of incorporating a memorial to Ave into it, his sister's memory would be preserved in the heart of the British Empire.

Around the end of 1891, Bhownaggree met with the Sir Frederick Abel, the director of the Institute. He proposed making a substantial donation, in return for the erection of a bust or statue of Ave somewhere in the building. Abel was interested, and the trustees of the memorial fund in Bombay were amenable (MMB to G. Birdwood 23.2.1892, GBC 216/33). Nevertheless, by the time Bhownaggree returned to India in October 1892, it was not certain whether the Institute would even accept the gift.

Back in Bombay, Bhownaggree marked 22 November, the fourth anniversary of Ave's death, in quiet reflection with his mother. By this time, it was becoming clear that the disagreements with the University were insuperable, and the memorial hall would never be built. Bhownaggree was now thinking of giving *all* of the money in the trust to the Imperial Institute (MMB to G. Birdwood 22.11.1892, GBC 216/33). Over the next month, he worked out a proposal. With the additional donation that he had made in 1891, the trust contained Rs 30,000, or about £2,000. He was prepared to add his own money to bring the total to £3,000, which he offered to the Imperial Institute. In return for what would be a huge donation, he expected something substantial:

the placing a tablet or a bust [of Ave] in a room of the Institute does not go far enough to satisfy me on this most important head. I do not see why a separate portion or gallery or even or [*sic*] room, – or whatever point my donation was to be devoted or spent – should not be called after my sister's name. . . . I have through other channels been of some use here to the Institute, do you think I am asking too much in wishing that my sister's name should be distinctly attached to that portion on which the money would be spent . . . ?

(MMB to G. Birdwood 4.1.1893, GBC 216/47)

This clearly represents a shift in Bhownaggree's identity. Except for the proposal 'to settle down in some quiet way in England' that he had made in the depths of despair after Ave's death, Bhownaggree had always regarded India as his home. His memorial projects in Bombay symbolized his commitment to the city of his birth. When he left for Europe in 1891, it was with every intention of going back to India.

Almost immediately after he returned to Bombay 18 months later in 1892, however, Bhownaggree reported that 'still my heart leaps back to dear old England . . .' (MMB to G. Birdwood 20.10.1892, GBC 216/33). This suggests that by now, he was beginning to consider London his real home, rather than Bombay. There is no firm evidence to support any of the possible explanations as to why this was, but it is quite reasonable to suppose that the failure

of the memorial hall project contributed to Bhownaggee's disillusionment with Bombay. Whether this is the case or not, though, the mere fact that he proposed to locate the principal monument to his sister in London must show that at least on some level, he now considered himself a Londoner rather than a Bombayite.

Bhownaggee soon found a means of returning to London. He persuaded the Prince of Bhavnagar to make his first visit to England, accompanied of course by himself (PD 121/1892, comp. 1928). Fortuitously, shortly afterwards it was announced that Queen Victoria would officially open the Imperial Institute in the spring of 1893 (*The Times* 28.11.1892, 12c–d). In return for a generous donation, the Prince was invited to the ceremonies (MMB to G. Birdwood 5.1.1892 [for 1893], GBC 216/33). The formal opening, on 10 May, was a glorious occasion, graced by the Queen and all but one of her children, three Indian princes (including Bhavnagar), and a host of British and foreign dignitaries (*The Times* 10.5.1893, 8c and 13a–c).

According to Collcutt's design, the plan of the Institute was a cross superimposed on a rectangle. The Main Building formed the bottom of the rectangle, running east–west along Imperial Institute Road.⁸ The north–south East Gallery (on Exhibition Road) and West Gallery were the right and left sides of the rectangle. At the time of the official opening, the Main Building was separated from the East and West Galleries by gaps of 112 feet on either side. Collcutt's intention was to bridge these gaps with two colonnaded corridors, which would be built so as to appear as extensions of the front of the Institute on Imperial Institute Road (*Year-Book* 829).

Sir Frederick Abel now informed Bhownaggee that his proposed gift of £3,000 would cover the construction of one of the corridors. They agreed to use the money for the corridor between the Main Building and the East Gallery, which housed exhibits of the products of India, Ceylon, and the Straits Settlements. Bhownaggee insisted that the corridor be named for Ave. Institute policy, however, precluded anything more than placing a memorial tablet in the room (see MMB to G. Birdwood 29.5.[1893], 8.6.1893 and 11.6.1893, all GBC 216/47). To ensure that this project did not go the same way as the memorial hall, Bhownaggee went directly to the Prince of Wales, who was president of the Institute. The Prince of Wales fully supported Bhownaggee, which left the Institute with no choice but to acquiesce. On 23 November 1893, the fifth anniversary of Ave's death, Lord Reay, the former governor of Bombay, unveiled a memorial to Ave in the room that, in her honor, was henceforth called the Bhownaggee Corridor. Reay observed that

the ceremony showed that our fellow-subjects in India looked upon this metropolis as their home as much as ours. . . . The present ceremony is in honour of the memory of a gifted young lady who, if spared, would have exercised a great influence for good. We cannot

forget the charm of her manner, the sterling worth of her intelligence, and the unaffected simplicity of her nature. Mr. Bhownaggree, who understands the great need of his countrymen, brought his sister here, and she endeared herself to those who educated her, and who expected great things from her when she returned to India as a pioneer. The home established in Bombay and the Bhownaggree Gallery [*sic*] will, however, preserve her memory from oblivion, and should stimulate her countrywomen to follow in her footsteps (*The Times* 25.11.1893 4a; the inscription on the memorial is in PP 23.11.1893).

VI

In 1892, Bhownaggree's fellow Parsi Dadabhai Naoroji had become the first Indian elected to the British Parliament. Dadabhai was a Liberal. Bhownaggree identified himself with the Conservative party, and at a banquet celebrating Dadabhai's election he had looked forward to the day when an Indian Tory would be elected to Westminster (Anonymous 1892: 83). In January 1894, Bhownaggree returned to India. He soon reported that many of his compatriots were urging him to stand for election as a Conservative. When the governor of Bombay, Lord Harris, supported the idea, Bhownaggree decided to act (MMB to G. Birdwood 9.3.[1894], GBC 216/65(b)). He resigned from his position in the Bhavnagar government, returned to London, and met with Captain R. W. E. Middleton, the chief agent of the Conservative party. This set in motion a train of events that ended in Bhownaggree's election to Parliament the following year.

As a Member of Parliament, Bhownaggree made his home in London. Until 1897 he lived in Chiswick. He then took a house on the Cromwell Road, within walking distance of the Imperial Institute, where he resided until his death in 1933. Although he remained a practicing Zoroastrian, Bhownaggree (perhaps appropriately for a Tory MP) began attending the Sunday services at the local Anglican parish church, St Luke's.⁹ In the church, he placed two further memorials to Ave. The first is a white marble tablet, carved by Geflowski, the sculptor who had made the bust that was eventually placed in the nurses' home. It shows Ave in profile, and bears the inscription 'To the glory of God and in loving memory of Ave Merwanjee Bhownaggree . . . erected by her mother and brother.' To the right of the tablet, on the north wall of the church, Bhownaggree installed a stained glass window. The window comprises three panels. Ave herself appears at the center. Above her is an angel, and the figures flanking her include Zoroaster on the left, and Christ on the right. If Bhownaggree's decision to build the corridor at the Imperial Institute in place of the memorial hall symbolizes the shift in his allegiance from Bombay to London, it seems reasonable to suggest that the tablet and window at St Luke's show his decision to make his permanent home in the neighborhood where he now lived.



Figure 8.2 Window in memory of Ave, in St Luke's Parish Church, Redcliffe Gardens, London (photograph by John McLeod).

VII

At first glance, it appears peculiar for a survivor to devote so much money and effort to commemorating someone who, while clearly well-liked, was not of any particular significance during her lifetime. If, however, the projects are regarded as an aspect of Victorian mourning, they begin to make sense. It has already been noted that Victorian mourning customs offered an effective means of coping with grief, and perhaps were responsible for the fact that '(T)he incidence of chronic and obsessive grief appears to be higher today than it was in the century before 1914' (Jalland 1989: 86). Bhownaggee was clearly devastated by Ave's death, and his memorial projects provided him with a means of coping with it. But there is more to it than that. Ave was only 19 years old at her death, and had never taken an active part in promoting

female education, Western medicine for Indian women, or the British Empire. As an educated young woman, however, she could symbolize 'progressive' India, giving her brother an additional reason to commemorate her with projects that furthered these causes.

The nature of the projects is relevant too, as they merge the Victorian tradition of mourning through public monuments with the Parsi custom of charity in commemoration of the deceased. Bhownaggree unveiled the memorial trust, which built both the home and the corridor, at the *uthamna* where memorial charities are traditionally announced. The projects themselves were not longstanding Parsi charities, but all of them were in keeping with an important part of 'progressive' Parsi identity in the late nineteenth century. Bhownaggree often demonstrated his commitment to both female education and the Empire, which can only have helped him in his relations with powerful Britons in Bombay and London.

The memorial projects are also connected with Bhownaggree's entry into Parliament in 1895. On one point there is no doubt: grief over Ave's death was the principal reason behind Bhownaggree's long visit to Europe in 1891–2. Then, so much did he enjoy this stay that he returned to London as soon as he could, in 1893. The pleasure he found in life in England must have contributed to his decision to accept suggestions that he run for Parliament.

Bhownaggree had been a well-connected member of Bombay's elite since long before Ave's death. Nevertheless, his work on the home and the abortive hall strengthened his contacts with two successive governors of Bombay, Lord Reay and Lord Harris, and with other prominent members of the colonial administration. They undoubtedly also served to demonstrate what the British regarded as both an indication that Bhownaggree was a fit partner in the progress of India (again a reminder of the similarities in ethos between many Parsis and Britons), and public-spiritedness of the kind expected of British political leaders. This (coupled, of course, with Bhownaggree's well-known support for the Conservative party) may well have been a factor in Harris's support for Bhownaggree's political candidacy.

In the same way, his financial support of the Imperial Institute was a reminder to the London political establishment of both his public-spiritedness, and (as Reay suggested at the opening of the corridor) of his belief in the British Empire. Both of these characteristics were important for a would-be MP. In the late nineteenth century, Members were expected to support charities in their constituencies, as Bhownaggree regularly did after his election (Visram 1986: 95). By showing that he was willing and able to spend money on what were seen as good causes, Bhownaggree helped demonstrate his suitability as an MP. His support for the Imperial Institute may have been particularly important for an Indian would-be MP, to demonstrate his loyalty to the Empire. (Too many scholars have elided the Indian nationalism of Bhownaggree's friend Dadabhai Naoroji with a desire for independence for India. In fact, while Dadabhai wanted a reorganization of the Empire, he did

not want to see it disappear. He too was a supporter of the Imperial Institute, and was one of the original members of both its governing body and its executive council.) Moreover, it can only have helped cement his ties with the Institute's president, the Prince of Wales. Being regarded as a friend of the Prince of Wales would have been an important asset in Bhownaggee's place in the small world of late Victorian society, which to a great extent coincided with the world of politics.

It was noted above that Bhownaggee's decision to devote the balance in the trust to the Imperial Institute rather than the memorial hall is probably a sign of his increasing identification with London as his home, rather than Bombay. It is possible that the failure of the hall project – the original purpose of the trust – was a contributing factor in loosening Bhownaggee's bonds with Bombay, just as the success of the corridor strengthened those with London.

What is unquestionable is that Bhownaggee sought to create permanent reminders of Ave's life and death. This was particularly true of the nurses' home and the corridor, both of which contained inscriptions and statues to ensure that Ave was never forgotten. Sadly, both buildings are now gone. By the 1980s, the nurses' home was dilapidated, and in 1985–6 it was demolished to make way for the Nivasi Doctor Vastigruha, an eight-storey home for medical residents at the JJ Hospital. The bust of Ave was moved into the building housing the office of the hospital's matron. The Bhownaggee corridor disappeared when the Imperial Institute was demolished between 1957 and 1967 to make way for the new glass and concrete Imperial College of Science and Technology (now Science, Technology and Medicine) of the University of London. For another generation, a misspelled form of its name was perpetuated in the Bhownagree Gallery, the art gallery of the Institute's successor the Commonwealth Institute in Holland Park. The closing of the Commonwealth Institute in 1999 means that the Bhownaggee Silver Medal at the Alexandra Institution, and the memorials in St Luke's, are now the only reminders of Awabai. Nevertheless, insofar as they provided visible memorials that kept his sister's name alive until long after his own death, Bhownaggee's memorial projects were successful testimonies both to his own perseverance and also to a strong element in the culture of many nineteenth-century Bombay Parsis.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is part of my full-length study *Indian Tory: a biography of Sir Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownaggee*. I conducted much of the research for the study in Mumbai in 2004, as a Senior Research Fellow of the American Institute of Indian Studies. Besides the AIIS and my Research Guide Dr V. K. Kshire, I must acknowledge the help of Professor Antoinette Burton, Mrs Panderkar Ashwini Chandrakant (Matron, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Group of Hospitals), Marzban J. Giara, Revd William Heald (St Luke's Parish Church), Acharya

Dr Ratnakar Narale, and the Alexandra Girls' English Institution, the Department of Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections of the British Library, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Cambridge University Library, the Mumbai Archives, the National Archives of India, and the William F. Ekstrom Library. My fellow participants in the International Symposium on Parsis in India and their Diaspora at the School of Oriental and African Studies in July 2006 made many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. I am particularly grateful for suggestions from John R. Hinnells, Jesse S. Palsetia, and Mitra Sharafi.

- 2 Mumbai has always been the city's name in Gujarati and Marathi, and since 1995 its official English name as well. In keeping with the usage of Bhownaggree and his contemporaries, however, the form Bombay is used in this chapter.
- 3 Esplanade Road is now Mahatma Gandhi Road, and Napier Road is Maharshi Dadhichi Marg. The site that Bhownaggree wanted is now occupied by the Atmasing Jessasing Bankebihari Municipal Eye Nose Throat Hospital (built in 1904 as the Bombay City Improvement Trust Building).
- 4 Adelaide Manning of the NIA tried to recruit Cornelia Sorabji to head the hall. Sorabji, the daughter of a Parsi convert to Christianity and one of the leading Indian feminists of her generation, however, wrote to her parents that 'I have seen Mr Bhownaggree's scheme and he wants an English lady as head; so that if I were appointed it would have to be after various plannings on the part of Miss Manning and her friends.' C. Sorabji to Sorabji family 26.9.1889, CSC 165/1.
- 5 It may be coincidence, but in August 1888 the wife of Bhownaggree's longtime political enemy Dinsha Wacha (1844–1936) died; in her memory, Wacha endowed a prize for female graduates of the Grant Medical College. D. Wacha to Dadabhai Naoroji 5.10.1888, DNP.
- 6 One of the cards is in DNP, B–130(3).
- 7 It is not clear whether the window was ever made, or what happened to it if it was. It is probably not the window now in St Luke's, which was apparently made specifically for the church.
- 8 Now Imperial College Road.
- 9 The religious significance of Bhownaggree's churchgoing is examined in Hinnells 1999a. My *Indian Tory* will explore different facets of Bhownaggree's relationship to Christianity, which he suggested was in its essentials identical to Zoroastrianism.

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Part III

PARSIS IN TWENTIETH- CENTURY INDIA AND IN THEIR DIASPORAS

JUDGING CONVERSION TO ZOROASTRIANISM

Behind the scenes of the Parsi Panchayat
case (1908)

Mitra Sharafi

In the 89th *quartier* of Paris's Père Lachaise cemetery lies the grave of a French woman who tried to become a Parsi and failed.¹ It is testament to Sooni Tata's 1908 defeat in the Bombay High Court. Had Mrs Tata's side won, her body could have been left in Bombay's *dokhmas* or towers of silence to be exposed to vultures according to traditional Zoroastrian death rites. In 1903, Suzanne Brière married into the Tata family, the Parsi 'royalty' of mercantile-industrial Bombay (see Lala 1992: 8–9). Immediately before, she tried to convert to Zoroastrianism by undergoing the *naujote* or initiation ceremony. Whether conversion to Zoroastrianism was permitted was in dispute. For orthodox Parsis, being born into the community was a prerequisite for initiation. For reformists, birth was just one possible route into the Parsi community. The other was conversion. Dinshaw Davar, the first Parsi judge of the Bombay High Court, and Frank Beaman, a blind British judge, ruled against Mrs. Tata (Figure 9.1). Rather than declaring conversion itself impermissible, they held that *juddins* or non-Parsis were excluded from enjoying the benefit of Parsi trusts, the legal instrument governing Zoroastrian religious properties and funds.

This chapter goes behind the colonial bench to offer new insights into *Petit v Jijibhai*, informally known as the Parsi Panchayat case. It provides a full account of the judicial dynamics at play – ethnic, personal, and professional – between the two individuals who decided the case. The case is generally taken to stand for the rejection of *juddin* admission into the Parsi Zoroastrian community, although a debate rages over whether the judges' comments on conversion were *obiter dicta* (of no precedential value) because the aspiring converts were not parties to the case (see Stausberg 2002: 56–7).² New archival sources from the Bombay High Court emphasize the contingency of this

witness, among others, the Ripon Memorial Fund, which he helped to carry through with conspicuous success.

In early life, working in concert with Mandlik, Sorabjee Bengalee, and Nowrosjee Furdoonjee, Sir Harikisondas gave promise of future usefulness after the manner and with the independence of those immortal friends of the people. But the magnetism of empty titles proved irresistible, and he gradually subsided into the shrewd and calculating man of the world with an eye to number one.

It must be admitted, however, that in his own way and according to his lights, our late colleague was a highly useful citizen, useful to his own community to whom he rendered some very valuable services in social matters, and to the public by acts of munificence, such as the establishment of the *Narupada Lunatic Asylum* with which much-needed institution his name will remain associated in local history. He was a man of unbounded energy, and as Sir Leo rightly observed, we all thought from the activity he showed that he was going to live very long, but we have no voice against Providence.

Another death had occurred about the same time, only passingly alluded to by one of the speakers to the last named resolution, because the event did not directly concern us; the deceased gentleman not having been a member of our body, though filling in life a conspicuous place in the larger outside world of which we form but an insignificant part. I refer to Mr. Virochand Deepchand, C. I. E., a highly respected Jain, honoured and esteemed not only by his own community but by all Bombay and Ahmedabad besides, a successful merchant and mill owner, General Secretary of the Swatanter Conference, a large-hearted, liberal-minded man, a true and earnest reformer in sympathy with the people and with important public movements, and one who took an active, though unostentatious and quiet interest in all the important social, educational, and political problems of his time. Mr. Virochand was a useful citizen whose death is a distinct loss to this city and to the land of his birth.

Monday, 23rd November.—We finished malaria today, though not in the sense desired by sufferers from its ravages. After having unsuccessfully medicated it at three sittings with hot words, we have simply handed it over, bound hand and foot, to Government, to be dealt with according to its deserts, and Government, in turn, are going to transfer it to a committee.

Breath wasted! If Government had but communicated their intention earlier, we should not have opened our mouths at all. As it is, we have simply exhausted ourselves in the vain attempt to talk down malaria.

But better late than never. For mere words never could have brought about a tangible result, and probably we would not have gone beyond words. Here was a good opening, therefore, to retire with

SIFTING!



[Justices Daver and Beaman delivered their judgment on Friday last (27th Nov.) in the famous Parsi Juddin Case. They have found that the defendants—the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayat Funds—were not validly appointed trustees; that the Trust Deed of 1884 was invalid so far as the power of appointing successors which the Deed purported to confer on the Trustees was concerned; and the Court however would appoint them, together with the present Sir Jamsetjee, Trustees for life; the Court dismissed the suit so far as it sought relief on all points relating to the conversion of Juddins and their right to participate in the charitable funds and institutions in the possession and under the management of the defendants.]

मेढो ने युधु याबना भेरेकी आरुआ.
[जुधु भाटे ज्योत नील तरङ्ग.]

असो रोळनी कुं जावे लवना मयुजीक तया संगीतना वाद्यत्रेया इंदिरानाया सरवेणी
कैद, यु.अ.

Figure 9.1 'Sifting'

Source: Hindi Punch (29 November 1908), 14.

final outcome. Drawing upon *Petit v Jijibhai*'s unpublished case papers and the judgment notebooks of Davar and Beaman, I show that the two judges were initially in favour of permitting limited conversion, that the position of Davar and the leading expert witness, J. J. Modi, turned against *juddin* admission in the final month of proceedings, and that ultimately Beaman also yielded to their view. Beaman's judgment notebook is particularly revealing because, until now, the only information available on witness testimony consisted of a few references in the published judgments. Beaman's notebook documents the cross-examination of Modi in great detail, along with Beaman's own reactions to Modi's testimony. His notes do not explain why Davar and Modi changed their position midway through the proceedings, but the informal influence of the Bombay solicitor and orthodox orator, J. J. Vimadlal, seems likely. The refusal of the defendants' lawyer to accept a compromise earlier during proceedings was also an important precondition for the final outcome of the case. By filling in the details of who these two judges were and how they interacted, I aim to historicize two judicial texts that have acquired pre-eminent status – both famously and infamously – in the Parsi community over the past century. *Petit v Jijibhai* was as much a story about personalities as about principles.

A number of scholars have analysed the case (although see Kulke 1974: 47). Tanya Luhrmann misreads the case as a reformists' victory, taking the case as authority that Parsi men who married out of the community could have their children recognized as Parsis, following proper initiation (Luhrmann 1996: 163–5). The case was not in fact about the status of offspring of mixed parentage. The issue was whether a *juddin* who converted to Zoroastrianism could enjoy the benefits of Parsi funds and facilities. The court ruled that she could not. Rashna Writer, Jesse Palsetia, Michael Stausberg and John Hinnells offer more careful readings of the case as an orthodox victory (Writer 1994: 129–48; Palsetia 2001: 228–51; Stausberg 2002: 53–7; Hinnells 2005: 118–20). They untangle the knot of public meetings, petitions, and published judgments that the *juddin* controversy produced. Because the existing scholarship does not rely upon unpublished court records, though, it reports on the final outcome of the case, rather than on what happened in the courtroom *en route*. This chapter tells that story.

The judges and the case

Frank Beaman and Dinshaw Davar arrived on the Bombay High Court bench by opposite routes. Frank Clement Offley Beaman (1858–1928) came to India as a covenanted member of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) at the age of 21 in 1879, having completed undergraduate studies at The Queen's College, Oxford. His father was Arderne Hulme Beaman, a Surgeon General in the army stationed at Hoshangabad in India ('Obituary: Beaman' 1928: 14; Foster 1968). His mother was a member of the illustrious Gompertz

family of Jewish converts to Anglicanism.³ From 1883 on, Beaman served in the judicial wing of the ICS. He began his judicial career in Gujarat, and spent the next 14 years there, and in princely Kathiawad and Baroda as an assistant collector, magistrate and sessions judge (Beaman 1925a). Beaman became a High Court judge in 1907 (Figure 9.2). Although members of the covenanted ICS enjoyed status and privilege generally, the judicial wing had long been the poor cousin of the revenue branch (Candy 1911: 472).⁴ Similarly, judges in the High Court who came through the ICS were considered second-class. This put Beaman in a doubly inferior position. Judges trained as barristers at the Inns of Court in London viewed ICS or ‘civilian’ judges with wariness on account of their lack of formal legal education: they were not actually lawyers by training. On the other hand, ICS judges could usually boast a greater knowledge of Indian languages and customs than their barrister colleagues (‘Judicial Administration’ 1914: 16; Vachha 1962: 59–65). Beaman learned his trade through years of experience at the middling levels in the *mofussil* or provinces, which were notorious for low-quality legal work (see Strangman 1931: 53).⁵ At his death, colleagues agreed that he was a remarkably able judge, particularly given his ‘civilian’ background (‘Ex-Bombay Judge’ 1928: 11). Magnifying this achievement was the fact that Beaman went blind over the course of his judicial career.⁶ He hired readers and learned to take notes on a typewriter in court (see Kamath 1989: 38–62). Beaman was a theosophist and a freemason, and published conservative articles extrajudicially that attracted public criticism – for defending the caste system and opposing women’s emancipation [see Figure 9.5; ‘(Bea-)man’

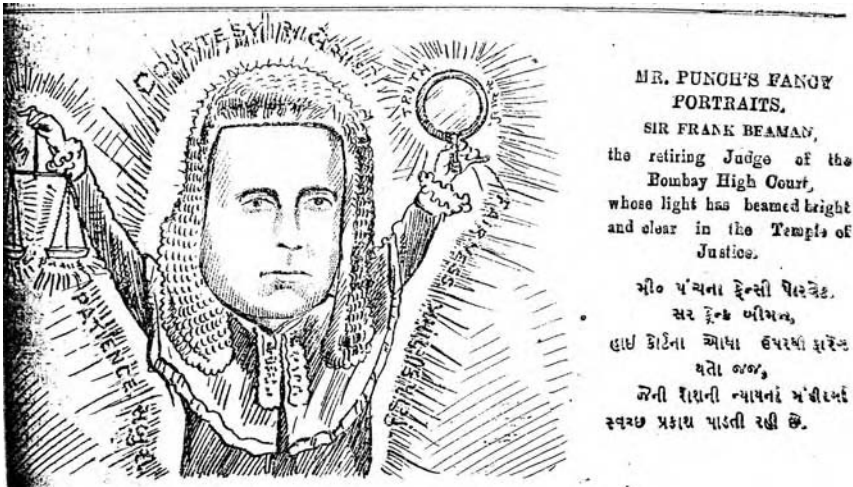


Figure 9.2 ‘Mr Punch’s Fancy Portraits: Sir Frank Beaman’.

Source: *Hindi Punch* (27 October 1918), 21.

1908: 10; also 'Obituary: Beaman' 1928: 14; Beaman 1890].⁷ He died in 1928 after diving into an empty swimming pool at his Swiss villa.⁸

Dinsha Dhanjibhai Davar (1856–1916) arrived at the High Court with the more prestigious pedigree of a London-trained barrister. He was the only son in a wealthy family of the priestly class ('Justice Davar's Death' 1916: 8). After studying at Elphinstone College in Bombay, Davar went to London in 1877 where he joined Middle Temple. He was called to the Bar in 1880. Davar returned to Bombay in the same year and was admitted as an advocate of the Bombay High Court. He built up a successful practice in the Small Causes Court and Police Court, where he excelled at cross-examination (see Davar 1911: 31–3). On 27 October 1906, Dinshaw Davar was made a judge of the Bombay High Court, the first Parsi appointed to the post ('First Parsi Judge' 1906: 9). His appointment would have huge ramifications for the Parsi community's relationship with colonial law. It was Davar who decided most major Parsi cases originating in the city of Bombay during his decade on the bench.⁹ He also famously sentenced the nationalist hero Bal Gangadhar Tilak to six years' rigorous imprisonment for sedition (untitled *Mahratta* article 1914: 205; 'On the release' 1914: 193–41; Vachha 1962: v, 93, 262–72; Chicherov 1966: 545–626). Davar campaigned for equal rights for Indian advocates (Davar 1911: 36; Darukhanawala 1939: 150). In 1914, he became the first Parsi to serve as Acting Chief Justice. Davar remained a High Court judge until his death in 1916, which struck before he could testify in the case deemed a Rangoon sequel to *Petit v Jijibhai*, the Privy Council appeal of *Saklat v Bella* (see Sharafi 2006).

Petit v Jijibhai was originally meant to be heard by Davar alone. At first, he refused to take the case on ethical grounds: he had advised the defendants as a lawyer a few years earlier.¹⁰ But even the plaintiffs insisted that he hear the case. Finally, convinced that there were new issues involved, Davar accepted, provided that another judge be brought in to hear the case with him, forming a 'special bench'. Beaman was the Chief Justice's addition.¹¹

The chain of protests, petitions and meetings leading up to the litigation has been documented by the existing scholarship. In court, the defendants argued that although Zoroastrian scripture permitted and even encouraged conversion, the Parsis had not accepted converts since their arrival in India from Persia in the eighth century. Convention trumped text. According to Davar, the point was moot because even if conversion were allowed, Parsi religious trusts were framed for the benefit of Parsis only. It was Davar's judgment that established that the term *Parsi* referred to an ethnic category and *Zoroastrian* to a religious one. In Beaman's view, the Parsi community had metamorphosed into a caste. The Parsis had adopted the institution after living amongst Hindus for over a millennium, and one could only enter a caste by being born into it. Together, the judgments of Davar and Beaman prohibited Mrs Tata from entering Zoroastrian fire temples, benefiting from Parsi charitable funds, and having her body consigned to the *dokhmas*. Even

if Mrs Tata may have been able to convert to Zoroastrianism – a point left technically unresolved by the judgments – she could never avail herself of the ritual, material and social benefits that came with membership of the Parsi Zoroastrian community.

Converting the bench

Hearings lasted just over nine weeks – from 7 February until 13 April 1908 (Figure 9.3). For at least the first month, both Davar and Beaman urged the parties to come to an out-of-court settlement allowing conversion under

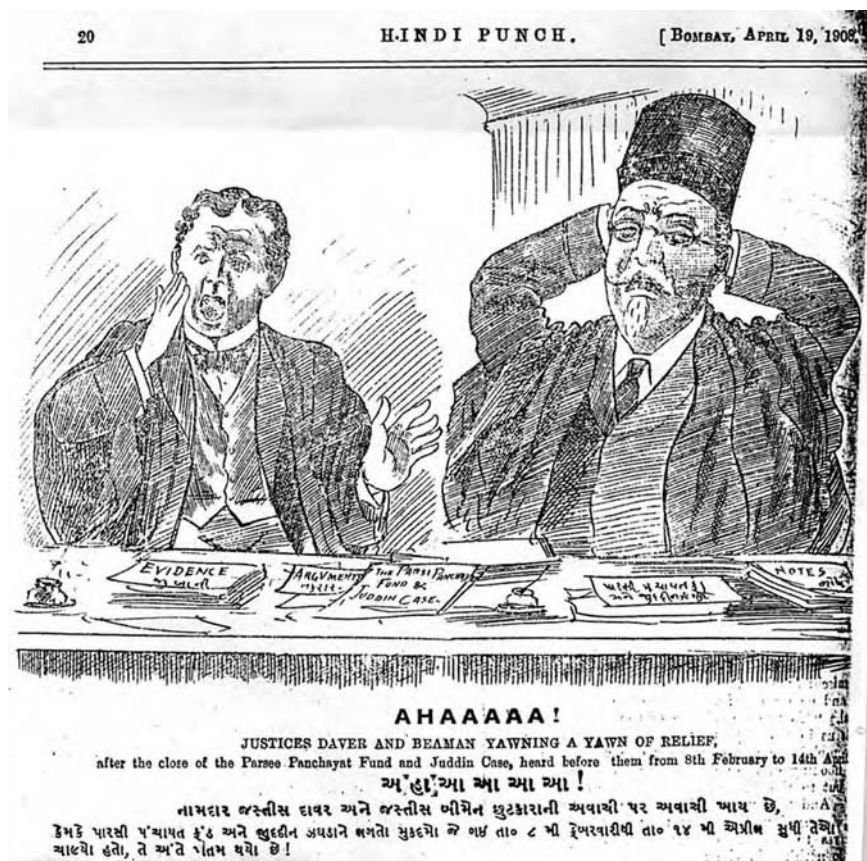


Figure 9.3 'Ahaaaaa! Justices Davar and Beaman Yawning a Yawn of Relief after the close of the Parsi Panchayat Fund and Juddin case, heard before them from 8th February to 14th April.'

Source: *Hindi Punch* (19 April 1908), 20.

limited circumstances. On 7 March 1908, the judges stated that they ‘might declare that the Zoroastrian religion permits conversions, but that the community (in a manner to be settled, if necessary, after further discussion) should regulate conversion by framing rules to safeguard it against abuse’ (‘Bombay Parsi Case’ 1908: 10). The defendants’ advocate, Thomas Strangman, noted in his memoirs that Davar and Beaman pressured him to recognize Mrs Tata’s conversion. They even supplied the parties with the terms of a proposed settlement. Strangman advised his clients to reject the offer – he considered it even more advantageous to Mrs Tata’s side than what her own lawyers were requesting. As a result, he was ‘subject to severe heckling by the Bench’. He consulted his senior, J. D. Inverarity, the Scottish star of the bar who was engaged with another suit during *Petit*. Inverarity advised Strangman to continue resisting the judges (Strangman 1931: 33).

Between 7 March and the close of hearings on 13 April, Davar changed his mind about conversion. Between 13 April and the delivery of the court’s decision seven months later, on 27 November 1908, Beaman also adopted an anti-conversion stance. But his acceptance of Davar’s view was half-hearted. Beaman’s reservations surface in his judgment notebook, particularly in his notes to himself. Beaman’s notes on the cross-examination of the leading expert witness, J. J. Modi, reveal details that have remained unknown since the trial took place: the notes have never before been examined. They also highlight points at which Beaman disagreed with Davar, the most important of which relate to Modi. In court, Modi adopted an anti-conversion position in opposition to his earlier published works and to the Parsi Panchayat’s sub-committee report. The report, overseen by Modi, had favoured limited conversion. Whereas Beaman perceived Modi to have lost all credibility by his ideological U-turn, Davar adopted Modi’s new reasoning enthusiastically during the last month of proceedings.

The scholar-priest J. J. Modi was the leading Parsi expert witness of the early twentieth century (Figure 9.4).¹² He was the most prolific author on Parsi and Zoroastrian topics of the late colonial period. Modi was secretary of the Parsi Panchayat. According to the plaint, he was in virtually complete control of Parsi Panchayat funds and properties.¹³ He had been a member of the expert committee appointed by the Panchayat to advise on the issue of *juddin* conversion. In fact, he drafted the committee’s report (Beaman 1908: 46).

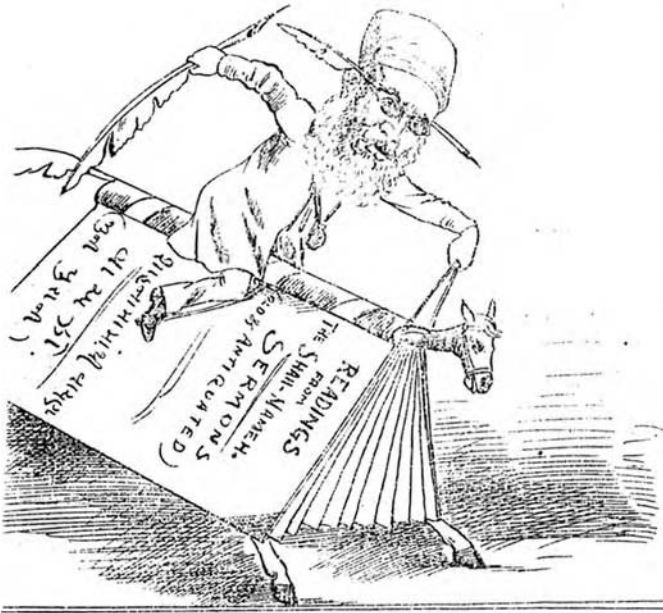
Davar mentioned Modi only sparingly in his judgment. However, Modi was the hidden motor behind Davar’s ruling, an unsurprising line of influence given that both men were religiously orthodox. Davar adopted the *Parsi–Zoroastrian* distinction from Modi (Beaman 1908: 51). He also borrowed the ‘floodgates’ argument: if converts were accepted, the lower castes would rush in to deplete Parsi wealth (Beaman 1908: 53).

Beaman disliked Modi intensely. In his published opinion, the judge

17 SEPTEMBER 13, 1908.

HINDI PUNCH.

11



MR. PUNCH'S FANCY PORTRAITS.

MR. JIVANJEE JAMSHEDJEE MODY,
the Secretary of the
Parsee Anjuman Funds
TROTTING OUT HIS OLD HOBBY !

(During the Parsee New Year Holidays.)

भी० प'थना के-सी
पोरनेट.

भी० छपनछ जमशेदछ
मोदी.

पारसी अनजुमन फंड्स
सेक्रेटरी.

जो भाषाजी लुनापुरा
ना घोडापर केनी इभाभदार
स्वारी करी जावु छे हज्जे !

Figure 9.4 'Mr Punch's Fancy Portraits. Mr Jivanjee Jamshedjee Mody'.

Source: *Hindi Punch* (13 September 1908), 11.

criticized Modi for recanting during cross-examination on positions he had earlier published:

Instead of telling the simple truth, that he had taken up these subjects without the least idea that they would ever have more than a scholarly and academic interest, and committed himself to opinions which, when brought to the test of a shattering concrete case, he could no longer maintain, he made the most pitiable efforts to show that he was perfectly consistent with himself, and that his 'Yea' of today was his 'Nay' of yesterday. I suppose few witnesses of equal eminence, character, and I hope, I may add, sincere honesty, have made a more deplorable exhibition of themselves in the witness-box than Mr. Modi.

(*Petit* 1909: 589–90)

Despite the fact that Beaman's comments were published in the reported

case judgment, discussions of Modi have been strangely silent on the episode (see Godrej 2002: 652; JamaspAsa 2002: 406).¹⁴

Three contradictions in Modi's testimony irked the blind judge. The first related to the fact that Modi had written the opinion of the Parsi Panchayat's sub-committee of experts. The report's conclusion was that Zoroastrianism permitted conversion: in court, Modi took the opposite position. In the report, he accepted conversion on theological grounds: when testifying, he rejected it on social ones. If converts were allowed, large numbers of lower caste opportunists might convert, draining Parsi resources (Beaman 1908: 53). Furthermore, allowing conversion would encourage Parsi men to marry out, creating a shortage of Parsi husbands for the young women in the community (Beaman 1908: 53; 'Materfamilias' 1908: 12). Another exchange with Lowndes, counsel for the plaintiffs, proceeded as follows (see Vachha 1962: 144-5; Kamath 1989: 44-5):

A. I am a religious man. In conflicts between the world and Religion, of course Religion prevails.

Q. If Religion told you to do one thing and the voice of the community another, which would you, do?

A. I would obey my Religion.

(Beaman 1908: 44)

And yet his contradiction of the report's conclusion was precisely on social, not religious, grounds. In Modi's own words,

I think that Religion in a sense should give way to social considerations. I don't think it advisable to take in alien converts in any circumstances whatever. I have thought long over the question. . . . I drafted that [report of the expert committee] myself. I signed it. I published it to the world. I have changed my opinion since drafting that and publishing it . . . I have not published any recantation. I have not recanted. I had not then to consider the social side of the question.

(Beaman 1908: 47-8)

Beaman was unimpressed.

The second contradiction involved historical cases of alleged conversion. Three Hindu pandits were said to have converted to Zoroastrianism 1,200 years earlier. Their names appeared in the Zoroastrian prayer, the *Dhup Nirang*. Lowndes, counsel for the plaintiffs, argued that '[t]ill he went into the box Modi had never doubted that the Pandits were converts from Hinduism' (Beaman 1908: 64). In court, Modi changed his view. First, he suggested that they were in fact Parsis from the beginning. He referred to a Gujarati book in which a Parsi named Dastur Edalji was spoken of as 'pandit', reprinting a newspaper article from the Parsi paper, *Jam-e Jamshed*, of 60 years earlier. 'The statement is that Edalji was a Pandit of the Pehlvi and Avesta language.

That makes me think it likely that the expressions in the Dhup Nirang refer to learned Parsis not to Hindus' (Beaman 1908: 44). The following day, though, Modi argued that the pandits were originally Hindus and remained so, their names appearing in Parsi prayers only because they were good men (Beaman 1908: 43, 53, 64). Davar accepted this explanation (*Judgments* 2005: 85). For Beaman, Modi's shift of argument meant a loss of credibility. The pandit issue only convinced Beaman that Modi's mind 'was so obsessed by the cause he had at heart, that he was utterly incapable of reasoning or even thinking correctly' (*Judgments* 2005: 172).

Modi's third contradiction concerned the alleged conversion of the Mughal emperor, Akbar. Beaman noted that Modi wrote 'an elaborate treatise, or, one might say, almost a book, to prove that the priests of Navsari were fairly entitled to the credit of having converted the Emperor Akbar' (*Judgments* 2005: 173). A scholarly debate ensued, eliciting interest as far away as England and France.¹⁵ The question was whether it was a Parsi or an Iranian Zoroastrian who deserved the credit for Akbar's religious re-orientation. Akbar was famous for inviting authorities from all religions to his court to debate the merits of each religion. A Parsi from Navsari, Dasturji Meherji Rana, attended, and Modi argued that it was he, rather than the Iranian Zoroastrian Ardeshir of Kerman, who influenced Akbar. But did Akbar convert? Modi's book was ambiguous. In Modi's own words, the question was: '[w]ho were the Zoroastrians that went to the Court of Akbar and *influenced him, to a small or great extent, towards Zoroastrian forms of worship, ritual and festivals?*' (Modi 1903: 3; italics added). Beaman was convinced that Modi's book claimed Akbar had converted, a view taken by historian Delphine Menant, who sent Modi a key source for his Akbar project (see Menant 1903: 38–9; although compare 'Social Evolution' 1922: 351 at note 106). In cross-examination, Modi disagreed:

It is not my opinion that Akbar was a convert to Zoroastrianism. That never was my opinion . . . When I used there the word 'influenced' I did not mean attempted to convert. It is correct that Akbar openly adopted some of the Parsi forms of worship. I think that was in consequence of the influence of the Naosari Parsi . . . It is not correct that Akbar was invested with the sacred shirt and thread.

(Beaman 1908: 54, 51)

The plaintiffs' advocate was critical of Modi:

Next Modi has to give up his most cherished tradition, the conversion of Akbar. He has written a book to prove it, and that he was so converted by a Naosari Parsi, and not by the Persian Zoroastrian Ardeshir. However Modi may now try to wriggle out of the plain meaning of his own words, the fact remains that he does

tell of a Naosari Parsi going up to TRY to convert Akbar, and how could that be if conversion had gone out of practice for 1200 years.

(Beaman 1908: 64)

Beaman agreed.

On several occasions, Beaman noted that he was not writing down everything Modi said because so much was irrelevant. While Modi was discussing the view of the *rivayats* on burial and exposure, Beaman wrote, '(I omit here notes of a good deal of unimportant and rather irrelevant talk. F. B.)' (Beaman 1908: 48). Not long after, he noted again, '(more fencing on the part of the witness as to whether in those days the Zoroastrians would have allowed converts to be exposed on their towers. It is useless to take down all he says. F. B.)' (Beaman 1908: 48). While Modi explained a point relating to his book on Akbar, Beaman commented, '([g]ives reasons for not believing the correctness of the statement [in] the Gazetteer, that the Parsis forgot whence they came etc. Not worth recording)' (Beaman 1908: 54).

At other times, Beaman noted that Modi contradicted himself and was visibly uncomfortable. On one occasion, Modi stated that he had never heard of any non-Parsis aside from Mrs Tata and the lesser-known aspiring convert in the case, a Rajput woman, being invested with *sudreh* and *kusti*.¹⁶ Beaman noted to himself: '(It appears to me all through this part of his evidence and indeed all through his cross examination this witness has prevaricated and fenced and shown such strong bias, that his evidence is virtually worthless, except where admissions are wrung out of him. F.C.O.B.)' (Beaman 1908: 45). At another point, Modi was asked for his opinion of Mrs Tata's *naujote* at the time of the ceremony. Initially he said that he opposed it, but then a letter he wrote several hours before the *naujote* was produced. In it, he accepted the initiation of *juddins* provided there were certain safeguards.¹⁷ Modi responded that he accepted *juddin naujotes* provided that no harm was done to the community. But harm would by definition be caused to the community, by his own account. During this exchange, Beaman remarked to himself: '(the witness now begins to fence and [tries] to get out of the difficulty)' (Beaman 1908: 50).

Differences of opinion between Davar and Beaman were obvious from Beaman's asides. On several occasions, Beaman wanted to exclude portions of Modi's evidence but was forced to admit them out of respect for Davar, who wanted them included. When Modi was about to list the social reasons why conversion ought to be forbidden, Beaman wrote, '(what follows is in my opinion quite irrelevant, but my learned Colleague thinks it might be remotely so, so of course the evidence must be taken. F. B.)' (Beaman 1908: 53). When Modi was asked about the community's view of conversion, Beaman again disapproved and lost: '(this was again objected to, and although I am of opinion that it ought not to be put, my learned Colleague thinks it

may be relevant, so it is put regardless of what if any weight may be given to the answer. FB)' (Beaman 1908: 54).

It seems that Modi and Davar changed their view of conversion, and left Beaman in favour of limited conversion until he too reluctantly came around. What happened? The legal record offers no clues. But external evidence makes the intervention of a Parsi solicitor named J. J. Vimadalal plausible. Vimadalal was a charismatic and influential figure in late colonial Bombay. 'The leader of the orthodox section of the community' and 'the last of the great Parsi orators', he was known for the 'clear, placid, mellow splendor' of his public speaking, and for his leadership in orthodox as well as theosophical and mystical *khshnoomist* circles (Patel 1937: 137). By one account, Vimadalal acted as a 'mighty brake on the headlong course of go-ahead reformers' who would otherwise have led the community 'into the vortex of destruction' (*Shet Jehangir Vimadalal Yadgari Granth* in Kulke 1974: 103 at note 47). He also took a lead in the creation and administration of a number of Parsi housing societies, the Athornan Mandal (a society for the education and well-being of the priesthood), the Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health League, and the Jashan Committee, which worked to provide religious education for Parsi children ('Obituary: Vimadalal' 1931: 19). Vimadalal was a founder of the Iran League, a body that strengthened ties between Bombay Parsis and Zoroastrians in Iran through charitable projects. He was also a prominent eugenicist. The Bombay solicitor adapted the Euro-American race theory that enjoyed worldwide favour until the Second World War to a South Asian and Parsi context (see Sharafi 2006: 328–41). Vimadalal published two works against intermarriage, the first of which was a series of letters in the *Oriental Review* responding directly to *Petit v Jijibhai* (*Mr. Vimadalal* 1910; Vimadalal 1922). Although the details of the meeting went unrecorded, it is known that Davar and Beaman consulted Vimadalal during *Petit* (Patel 1937: 140). Vimadalal was a constant presence in a number of other lawsuits involving Parsis during the same period. He and Davar knew each other well through these interactions, and were two of the most powerful Parsi legal minds of their time.¹⁸

A united front?

Beaman yielded to Davar because he was the weaker judge in several ways. The *Times of India's* obituary of Beaman noted his submissiveness:

after having taken throughout a strong line in favour of recognising the rights of converts to Zoroastrianism, at the end he somewhat weakly gave in to his more practical and masterful colleague, and became party to a monumental judgment which has been freely criticised.

(‘Ex-Bombay Judge’ 1928: 11)

Beaman himself opened his judgment by describing the shift in his position:

When I left India, in April, I did not feel prepared to adopt, in their entirety, what I then understood to be my brother Davar's reasoning and conclusions . . . But it was also understood that, in the time which must elapse before we could meet and deliver Judgment, we would give unremitting attention to the principal points and to each other's views upon them, so that, if possible, we might, after all, avoid the necessity of any difference of opinion, if possible, even of pronouncing separate Judgments . . . I have carefully studied the elaborate second part of Davar J's Judgment; and while I am doubtful still whether we look at all parts of the complicated question eye to eye, it is a source of great satisfaction to me that I am able to agree with the main conclusion.

(*Petit* 1909: 558–9)

A popular Parsi song by the early twentieth-century satirist Dr Jehangir Wadia made the point more bluntly: '*Justice Davar betha chukado karva ne sathe betha Beaman ha ji ha dhunva*' ('Justice Davar sat to do justice and beside him sat Beaman to chant, "Yes Sir!"') (see Bana 2005).¹⁹ The advocate P. B. Vachha reported that Davar occasionally let personal prejudice colour professional opinion (Vachha 1962: 91). At Davar's death, one obituary noted that he never hesitated to speak his mind without restraint 'when a stronger judge would have found virtue in discreet silence' ('Justice Davar's Death' 1916: 8). On one occasion, counsel described a client as being of respectable social standing. Instead of considering only the admissible evidence, Davar exploded, '[r]espectable man of high position! You think I do not know him? Ask him if he was not a hack Victoria driver only a short while ago!' (Vachha 1962: 91 at note 6). His extrajudicial behaviour during *Petit* was another case in point. Popular memory has it that, returning home after the hearings every evening, Davar would take the long route home in order to wave to crowds of orthodox Parsis who lined the streets outside Allbless Bagh, a Parsi meeting place, in his honour.²⁰ One Parsi biographical dictionary reported that Davar was proclaimed 'the saviour of Zoroastrianism' by the orthodox section of the community for his 1908 decision (Darukhanawala 1939: 150). A 1917 book dedication to Davar made the same point, calling him

A true Parsee Hero, who has for good routed the efforts of the advocates of *Juddin*-marriage and conversion, who has saved the Parsee community from racial degeneration and extinction, who has by his *learned decision* from the bench in the year 1908, given effect to the wishes of thousands of Parsee donors that the use of the

charity funds, fire temples, dokhmas and other religious institutions endowed by them should be allowed to Parsees only.

(Masani 1917; italics original)

One further connection reinforced Davar's ultimate identification with the orthodox in *Petit*. His son, Jehangir D. Davar, was married to the former Miss Virbaiji J. Jijibhai, presumably a member of the family of one trustee-defendant, Sir Jamsetjee Jijibhai. Jijibhai was the unofficial head of the Parsi community in Bombay (Darukhanawala 1939: 110; see Figure 1 for the image of an airborne Sir Jamsetjee Jijibhai).

One factor contributing to Beaman's deference was Davar's seniority. Davar was made a judge of the Bombay High Court on 9 November 1906 ('D. D. Davar' 1909: 487). Beaman's judgeship was confirmed two months later, in January 1907 ('F. C. O. Beaman' 1909: 404). Although this made Davar only slightly senior to Beaman, judicial culture took seniority seriously (see s. 103(2) of Government of India Act 1915 in *Letters Patent* 1922: 77; Beaman 1926: 10–12).²¹ It was the judgment of the senior judge that would prevail even if the other judge disagreed (s. 36 of Amended Letters Patent 1865 in *Letters Patent* 1922: 67). Judicial culture and etiquette may have informed the politics of dissent for Beaman.

Davar's seniority gave Beaman a procedural reason to concur. Only if the Davar-Beaman 'special bench' reached a unanimous finding could the plaintiffs leapfrog over the next level of the Bombay High Court to be heard directly by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London (ss. 15, 39 of Amended Letters Patent 1865 in *Letters Patent* 1922: 67, 72–3). By an odd procedural twist, Beaman could help the plaintiffs more at the next level by ruling against them in the immediate term. In other suits, Beaman delivered his rulings with the likelihood of appeal explicitly in mind (see Beaman 1925b: 251). Perhaps he was trying to clear the way for a swift appeal to London. Despite general expectations, it was a road not taken by the parties (see 'Butterflies' 1908: 17).²²

Finally, Beaman was out of India on furlough 'on urgent private affairs' between 9 June and 18 October 1908.²³ The hearings ended on 13 April 1908, and judgment was delivered on 28 November 1908. Beaman referred somewhat sheepishly to his absence from India for the period when the judgments were being written. The two judges corresponded about the case while Beaman was away, but it still seems that Davar did the bulk of the work associated with the case. Beaman wrote,

I cannot close without expressing my deep sense of gratitude and obligation to my brother Davar for the immense amount of labour he has spared me. All the drudgery of the case fell on his shoulders . . . No one who was not associated with him can fully appreciate his unwearied patience and serenity, sustained throughout a great trial

which must have imposed upon him – *himself a leading member of the Community whose interests were so vitally at stake* – an almost unprecedented strain and responsibility.

(*Judgments* 2005: 193; italics added)

The last sentence further explains Beaman's weakness in *Petit*. Beaman was a British judge in a colonial court, but he was well aware that he was an outsider in *Petit*.

Petit v Jijibhai caught the colonial legal profession at a moment when South Asians – and Parsis in particular – were making their presence felt in bold new ways. One managing clerk of a Parsi law firm declared triumphantly that South Asian firms were taking over. Writing in 1911, he commented that Europeans were finding it hard to compete with Indians 'who have secured almost the whole of the native public for their clients. The European firms were obliged to consolidate together to make a stand against the native firms' (Mistry 1911: 73). In the early twentieth century, Parsis constituted between a quarter and two-fifths of all the advocates and solicitors in Bombay, despite being just 6 per cent of the city's population (Mistry 1925: 47, 60–3; *Gazetteer* 1909: 273). They were even over-represented on the bench of the Bombay High Court, constituting almost 11 per cent of judges (see ILR Bom judges' lists, 1876–1930). As the first Parsi appointee, Davar led the way.

The structure of legal judgments also reflected the shift in the legal profession's ethnic makeup. Prior to 1900, South Asian judges generally contributed a single concurring line after their European colleagues' leading judgments, if they said anything at all (see, for example, *Keshav Ra'mkrishna v Govind Ganesh* ILR 9 Bom (1885) 94–7; *Padajira'v v Ra'mra'v* ILR 13 Bom (1889) 160–7). Nasty anonymous poems about the few South Asian judges of the late nineteenth century surface in the private papers of their European colleagues.²⁴ As South Asian judges became more senior, though, they began to deliver the court's judgments (see Ranade J in *Vyas Chimanlal v Vyas Ramchandra* ILR 24 Bom (1900) 473–81; *Hanmantapa v Jivubai* ILR 24 Bom (1900) 547–55; *Venkappa Bapu v Jivaji Krishna* ILR 25 Bom (1901) 306–12; *Vinayak Narsinh v Datto Govind* ILR 25 Bom (1901) 367–9; *Krishna v Paramshri* ILR 25 Bom (1901) 537–43). In this way, the idiosyncratic religious and political views of South Asian judges became etched upon South Asian communities as those communities' cases passed through the legal grid.

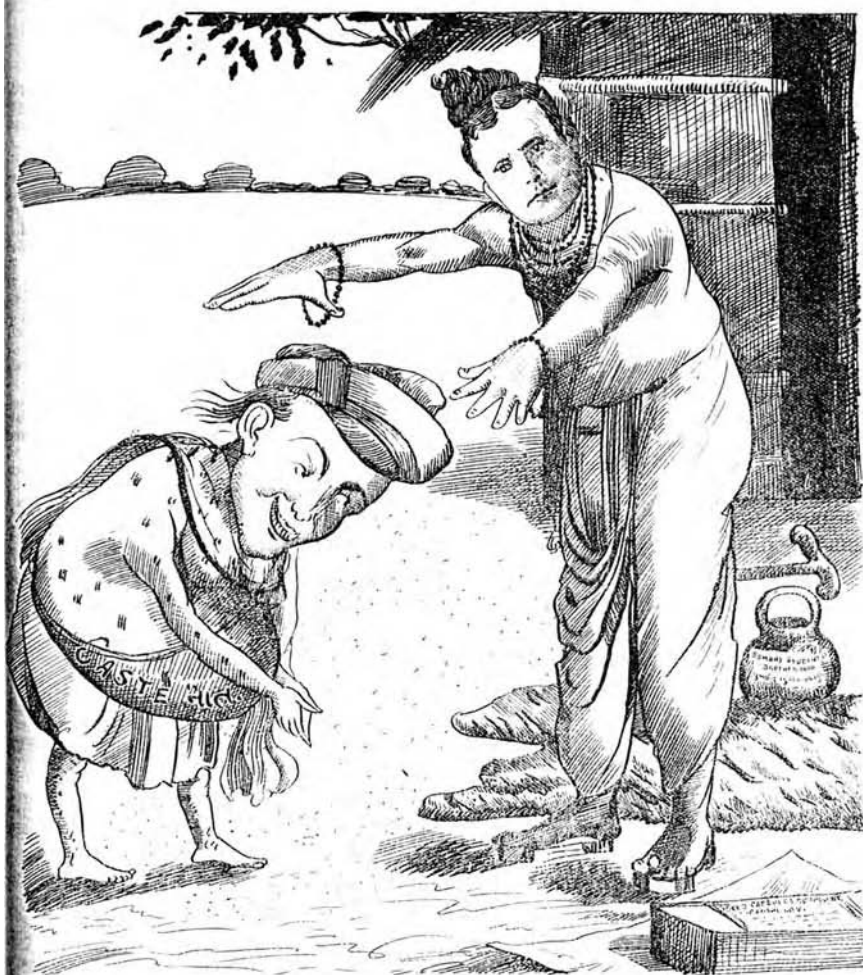
The larger mandate of the colonial legal system gave Beaman another reason not to dissent from Davar's position. Rule-of-law rhetoric was an essential strand in the justification of colonialism in India, not least of all in Beaman's own writings (see Beaman 1890: 40, 45). By pro-colonial accounts, the law courts of British India were run both for the benefit of the South Asian population, and because Indian rulers were incapable of doing the job properly (Vachha 1962: 4–5, 52, 60–2).²⁵ Law courts in pre-colonial and

princely states were depicted as bastions of arbitrary despotism (Beaman 1890: 40–5; Strangman 1931: 189, 197). The rule of law was a standard pretext for annexation into British India.²⁶ Judicial unity and uniformity were key bricks in the rule-of-law edifice. Colonial justice had to be seen to be meted out through a consistent process that did not depend upon the idiosyncrasies of the individual assigned to a case. Judicial uniformity was essential if like cases were to be treated alike – the definition of fairness and antidote to the ‘justice’ of Oriental despots. Because judicial dissent was particularly inappropriate in a colonial setting, Beaman may have felt obliged to yield to Davar. The final court of appeal for the empire, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, was not permitted to issue dissenting judgments, or even concurring ones (Bentwich 1912: 341; Hollander 1961: 29–30). Like political ‘children,’ colonial subjects needed a clear and simple message (Chakrabarty 2002: 8–9; Mehta 1999: 31–3). Contradictory judgments from the same bench would only create confusion, and potentially undermine the authority of the court and the legitimation of colonialism that was an unspoken part of its work. Beaman’s decision to write a concurring opinion reflected the desire to assert some independence, whilst stopping short of actually contradicting his Parsi colleague.

A final insight into Beaman’s shift may lie in his caste-based argument against conversion. Beaman was a well-known admirer of the Hindu caste system.²⁷ After addressing a Bombay student organization in 1914, Beaman was ridiculed by reformist Parsi magazines like *Hindi Punch* for declaring the ‘wonderful system of caste’ an essentially sound organizing principle that was ‘admirably adapted to social needs’ whilst guaranteeing social stability (Figure 9.5) (‘Rishi’ 1914: 17). Beaman rested his ruling in *Petit* on the idea that the Parsis had transformed themselves from a religious community into a caste. It was through this rationale that the community could initiate illegitimate children of Parsi paternity but not non-Parsi candidates, albeit from ‘respectable’ social backgrounds like the French Mrs Tata (*Petit* 1909: 594–608). One wonders if this argument had special appeal for Beaman. The caste argument left virtually no mark on the Parsi conversion debates (for a rare exception, see Strangman 1931: 32). But having the opportunity to present his pet thesis may have helped Beaman rationalize his final change of position.

Conclusion

The Davar–Beaman relationship was an inversion of the stereotypical one between European and South Asian judges. It was a reversal that became increasingly possible as South Asians rose within the ranks of the legal profession. Davar dominated Beaman by force of personality, seniority and membership of the Parsi community. There seemed to be a sense of guilt on Beaman’s part for his long absence from India. Beaman’s ICS background



"A RISHI COME TO JUDGMENT!"

RISHI BEAMAN-MITRA—*Kalyán, betá, kalyán!* You're of the hoary past, and you deserve to be cherished! **THE BLOATED BOGEY**—*Rishi Maharaj, how can I sufficiently thank you! You are my saviour! My friend, not judged a true Rishi, when my own kith and kin level anathemas against me and heap coals of fire on my head!* ["I must own at the risk of some unpopularity to an evergrowing admiration for the wonderful system of caste, finely received and admirably adapted to social needs by your sapacious and most rightly venerated ancestors. Proof, if any were needed, of its essential soundness, is best given by its long duration and the general social stability which it ensured."—*Mr. Justice Beaman at the Students' Brotherhood of Bombay.* At the Social Conference, held at Meerut during the Easter holidays and presided over by Rai Bahadur Lala Harnath, and at the Tanjore District Social Conference, presided over by Sir Maharaja Maje, the question of the abolition of caste was discussed with much warmth in the inaugural addresses of the Presidents.]

येक रषी भारी एनसाइ करवा आया छे!

[यह भूत बुद्धि भीतर गया]

Figure 9.5 'A Rishi Come to Judgment! Rishi Beaman-Mitra': *Kalyán, betá, kalyán!* You're of the hoary past, and you deserve to be cherished! The Bloated Bogey: Rishi Maharaj, how can I sufficiently thank you! You are my saviour! My friend, not judged a true Rishi, when my own kith and kin level anathemas against me and heap coals of fire on my head!

Source: *Hindi Punch* (26 April 1914), 17.

and even his blindness may also have created a residual feeling of weakness vis-à-vis his Parsi colleague (see *Petit* 1909: 569). If Davar and the expert witness Modi became persuaded to oppose conversion midway through, the real force behind the scenes may have been the charismatic orthodox solicitor, Vimadalal. The defendants' lawyer's refusal to give in to the judges' initial pressure also enabled the shift. Beaman was probably the last proponent of restricted conversion; this may explain his unusual decision to produce a separate but concurring judgment in the case. In a period when Parsi lawyers and judges were starting to take control of cases involving Parsi litigants, the Davar–Beaman interaction is significant not just for the substantive outcome of *Petit*, but also as an indication of changing dynamics within the colonial legal profession. The fissure between the two judges was coated in understatement and deference for the sake of maintaining the appearance of a unified judiciary, a symbol of the rule of law. Within the Parsi community, the legal profession, and in the larger colonial context, the influence of personalities and politics underscore the contingent nature of *Petit*'s final outcome.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Princeton University and Sidney Sussex College Cambridge for their support, and to Dirk Hartog and John Hinnells for their encouragement. Thanks are also due to staff at the Bombay High Court, Privy Council Office, Cama Oriental Institute, and British Library; and to participants of the 2006 Parsi studies workshop in London for their constructive criticism. Translations from the Gujarati have been provided by Homi D. Patel. All *Hindi Punch* images (SV 576) appear by permission of the British Library (© The British Library. All Rights Reserved). Unclear words from archival sources are indicated by square brackets. BHC stands for Bombay High Court; BLJ for *Bombay Law Journal*; ICS for Indian Civil Service; ILR Bom for *Indian Law Reports* Bombay series; IOR for India Office Records; and PCO for Privy Council Office.
- 2 Given the nature of legal interpretation in practice, the debate has been overstated. The question is not so much whether the judges' comments are of binding or no authority, but whether they are of binding *or persuasive* authority. By ruling at length on the point, Davar and Beaman put a number of arguments into circulation for use in future legal discussions. Furthermore, the rulings need not be of any social authority. That they have acquired quasi-canonical status in the Parsi community reflects the implicit esteem with which many Parsis regard the legal system.
- 3 I am grateful to Roland Hulme-Beaman of Dublin for this information (4 January 2004). The Gompertz family included the inventor Lewis Gompertz (d. 1861) and the mathematician Benjamin Gompertz (d. 1865). Beaman's Jewish heritage made his likening of Parsi and Jewish communities in *Petit* particularly intriguing (*Petit* 1909: 582).
- 4 See 'Memorial addressed to the Government of India from Mr M. H. W. Hayward, ICS, a third grade judge in the Bombay Presidency, making certain suggestions for the improvement of the Judicial Branch of the Indian Civil Service in this presidency, addressed to Lord Curzon, Karachi (24 September 1902),' *Bombay Judicial Proceedings*: September–December 1902 (P/6487) (IOR).

- 5 See letter from F. C. O. Beaman to B. G. Kher (Gulmarg, Kashmir; 29 June [1920–1]), 41 in Kher Collection.
- 6 The judge had a brother in England who was also blind. Many thanks to Roland Hulme-Beaman for this information (21 December 2003).
- 7 Beaman's openness to conversion to Zoroastrianism is noteworthy because so many fellow theosophists were orthodox Parsis and strictly opposed. See Sharafi 2006: 92–100.
- 8 The pool had been drained without Beaman's knowledge. Beaman's blindness prevented him from seeing this fact for himself. Many thanks to Roland Hulme-Beaman for this account (18 January 2004).
- 9 After *Petit*, Davar's most famous Parsi decision was the commemorative death ceremony or *muktad* trust case of *Tarachand v Soonabai* ILR 33 Bom (1909) 122–213. See Sharafi 2006: 398–402.
- 10 See 'Plaintiffs' Evidence. Exhibit 36: Copy of Queries with answers of the Advocate General, Mr Davar and Mr Inverarity, filed before Commissioner, 23 January 1905,' 303–17 in *Saklat v Bella* (PCO).
- 11 *Petit v Jijibhai* (Suit No. 689 of 1906), 28–1–08, 1–2 in Davar, 'Judgments 7 January 1908–7 December 1908' (BHC).
- 12 After *Petit v Jijibhai*, the most famous case in which Modi testified was *Tarachand v Soonabai*. See note 9.
- 13 *Plaint*, 7 recto-verso in *Petit* (BHC).
- 14 There was little mention of the *Petit* episode at a conference held to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Modi's birth (21 February 2004, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai).
- 15 See Letter to Delphine Menant from [G. Boneto Maury], Paris (undated), 1–2; and letter to Delphine Menant from Edward S. Browne, Newcastle-on-Tyne (31 December 1903); in Menant Papers.
- 16 The Rajput woman was the elderly mistress of a Parsi man, and mother of several children by him. She was in a 'much humbler sphere of life' than Mrs Tata, and remained unnamed throughout the proceedings (*Judgments* 2005: 9; *Petit* 1909: 525).
- 17 Even Davar felt that the sixth plaintiff had not been treated fairly, given Modi's letter. The sixth plaintiff was R. D. Tata, the husband of Suzanne Brière and the driving force behind the litigation (*Judgments* 2005: 141).
- 18 For instance, Davar awarded victory in the *Tarachand* case to Vimadalal's team. See note 9.
- 19 I thank K. N. Suntook of Mumbai for this rendition (16 February 2004).
- 20 Many thanks to Fali Nariman of Delhi for this account (8 March 2004).
- 21 See Sir Norman Macleod, 'Reminiscences from 1894 to 1914' (HRA/D63/A5), 64–5 in Macleod Papers.
- 22 See 'Defendant's Evidence. No. 29: Evidence of Nanbhoy Nowrojee Katrak, taken on commission in the Court of Small Causes, Bombay' (15 May 1916), 569 in *Saklat v Bella* (PCO).
- 23 *Histories of Service* 1917–8 (V/12/305), 3 (IOR).
- 24 See 'The Bombay Beule as constituted 29 April 1884' (HRA/D63/A1) in Macleod Papers.
- 25 See 'An English Judge,' *Jam-e Jamshed* (4 May 1926) in 'Press Cuttings, 1915–40' (HRA/D63/A6) in Macleod Papers.
- 26 This was particularly so before 1857–8, although the 1885–6 annexation of Burma was a notable exception: 'Confidential. British Burma. Foreign Department – No.1610. From E. S. Symes . . . Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, British Burma. To the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department (Rangoon, 16 October 1884)' (MSS Eur E356/10), 3 in White Collection.

- 27 He also believed in *karma* and reincarnation. See letter from Beaman to Kher ([Gulmarg], June 20 [1919–22]), 35–6 in Kher Collection.

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IRANIANS AND INDIANS ON THE SHORES OF SERENDIB (SRI LANKA)

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The ‘resplendent land’ (Sanskrit: *Sri Lanka*), the ‘island’ (Sanskrit: *Lankadipa*), or ‘island of jewels’ (Sanskrit: *Simhala-dvipa*, *Silandiva*, *Senendiva* > Arabic: *Serendib* > Portuguese: *Cilao* > Dutch: *Zeilan* > English: *Ceylon*) lies at the Indian subcontinent’s southern tip. Sri Lanka’s location (Figure 10.1) in the Indian Ocean facilitated maritime trade between Iran, India, Africa, and China. Mariners utilized the southwest monsoon winds from June to October for sailing eastward, the northeast monsoon winds from December to March for sailing westward, and the island’s deepwater harbors for docking (Whitehouse and Williamson 1973; Carswell 1977–78; Prickett 1990; Daryaei 2003; Potts 2006).¹ That trade brought some Zoroastrians from Iran and India to the island’s ‘copper colored’ (Sanskrit: *Tamba Vanna*, *Tamraparni* > *Tambapanni* > Greek: *Taprobane*) shores.² Others came as soldiers, advisors, bankers, and skilled and unskilled service providers. Economics and politics are well-known factors in the creation and persistence of diasporas. The importance of technology to bring about movement, on the one hand, and familiarity with a location to and from which movement occurs, on the other hand, are two other important but less visible factors in diaspora formation and maintenance. Events in Sri Lanka serve as a model case study for those issues, motivations, and consequences.

Ancient Silandiva or Taprobane and medieval Serendib

It was recorded in Sanskrit texts known as the *Sihigiri-vitara* or Story of Sigiriya that a Maga Brahmana or magian (Zoroastrian) priest, who had accompanied mercenaries from Iran to the northcentral Sinhalese city of Anuradhapura, visited king Dhatusena (ruled 455–73) to offer service and counsel.³ The Maga Brahmana told Dhatusena about the Achaemenian dynasty, its founder Cyrus II (Sanskrit: Kuvera ruled 550–530 BCE),

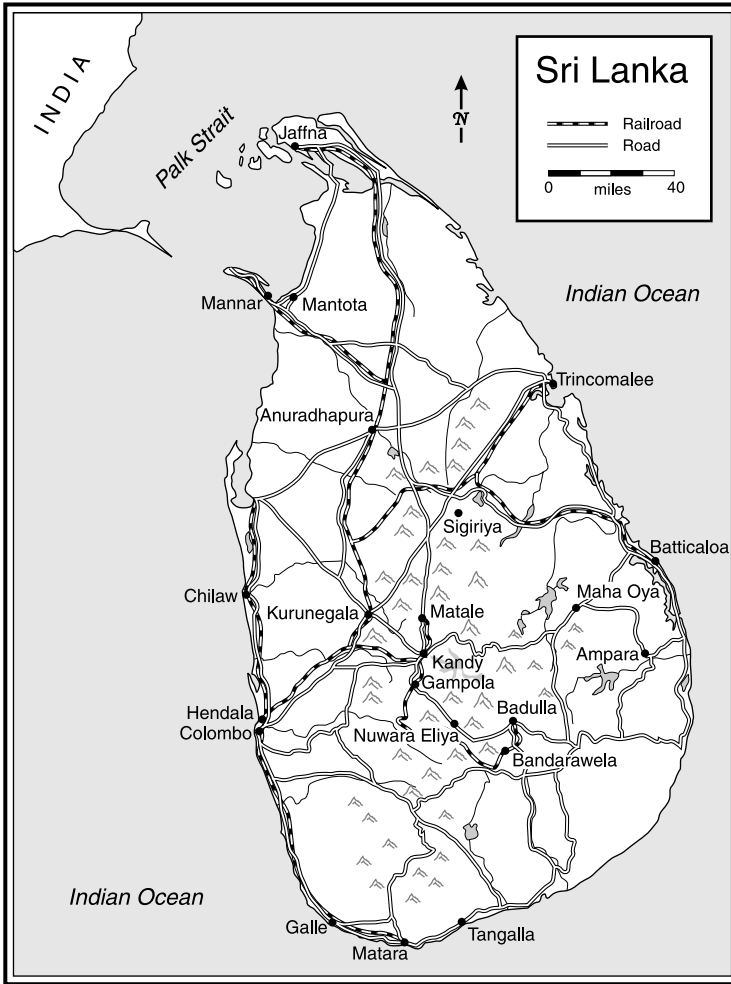


Figure 10.1 Map of Sri Lanka.

championed the Persian custom of consanguineous marriage, and convinced the Sinhalese monarch to achieve greatness by building a residential palace atop a summit like that at Pasargadae (in southwestern Iran). Dhatusena appointed the magus as royal counselor, had him choose the site of Sigiriya (Simhagiri, Sigiri), and placed him in charge of raising funds for a palace atop that rock through a birthday gift-giving ceremony in which subjects arrived with tribute offerings for their monarch (much like the *apadana* processional scene at Persepolis). Thereafter, palace construction commenced on Sigiriya under the magus' supervision (Paranavitana 1972: text 12–13, 16–18, 21–2, 47).⁴

There probably were other Zoroastrians on the island before that time. The first Iranians known to have reached the shores of Senendiva sailed there over the Indian Ocean during the reign of Darius I (Sanskrit: Dharayatuvasu ruled 522–486 BCE) (Paranavitana 1972: text 121, 123). They had been sent by the Iranian state to reconnoiter sea routes, lands, and resources of the Indian Ocean. The Greek historian Herodotus (lived ca. 484–430 BCE) provided a degree of correlation, having noted in his *History* that Darius after subduing the Indians ‘made use of this sea’ (Godley 1938: 4.44). The religious affiliation of those sailors is not stated in extant records, but presumably many were Mazda-worshippers in keeping with the Achaemenian empire’s official devotion to Ahura Mazda. Most of them sailed eastward, as surviving documents claim. Some of the sailors may have settled on the island, intermarrying with the indigenous population and being assimilated ethnically, confessionally, and culturally. As a result, no further evidence of their presence can be traced thereafter.

Contact between the Iranian plateau and the resplendent land continued during subsequent centuries, as sailors, traders, and warriors moved over land and sea. Iranian dominance of the sea routes across the Indian Ocean seems to have kept Greeks and Romans from having much direct contact with Sri Lanka in antiquity, as evidenced by most of the information from writers in those societies having been obtained through intermediaries such as Indians and Iranians (Weerakkody 1997). Trade was certainly a major mechanism of relocation. Religious change was another (cf. Anklesaria 1958). So was warfare, with the need for troops whose skills and loyalty could be purchased. Indeed, in the fifth century, Dhatusena came to power in Senendiva using a mercenary army composed of Sakas from the provinces of Fars and Sistan in Iran. Many of those Iranians had been forced out of the Sasanian empire by the king of kings Peroz (Sanskrit: Prayarsi ruled 459–84) for adopting the Christian (Sanskrit: *Kraistava*) faith or for following Manichaeism (Sanskrit: *Manikyā*) tenets. Some of them were said to follow the ‘Persian religion’ (Sanskrit: *Parasika-samayam*), as Zoroastrianism was called. The Iranian troops sided with one of Dhatusena’s sons, named Kassapa, in a struggle for succession (Paranavitana 1972: text 34–5, 118–19). The *Culavamsa* or Lesser Chronicle of Sinhalese history, compiled by Buddhist monks in the Pali language during the thirteenth century, claims that Dhatusena was immured by Kassapa with ‘his face turned eastward’ – echoing the Zoroastrian praxis of taking last rites while facing the sun or another source of light such as a fire (Geiger 1953: pt. 1, 38.80–115).

The Maga Brahmana who had served Dhatusena went on to advise the parricidal king Kassapa I (Kasyapa I ruled 473–91) on matters of taxation, trade, and currency regulation along the manner of practices of ‘the kings of ancient Persia.’ Kassapa had the magus add rock reliefs, frescos, and pleasure gardens to create an Iranian *paradayada* or walled estate on 395 acres of the plain around Sigiriya rock (Figure 10.2). The Maga Brahmana convinced



Figure 10.2 Sigiriya Gardens.

Kassapa to adopt the Iranian Zoroastrian practice of interment in a rock tomb ‘like the corpses of the ancient Persian kings,’ but Kassapa’s defeat in battle (by his rival half-sibling Moggallana or Mugallan I ruled 491–508) and suicide thwarted those arrangements. Likewise, Kassapa may have joined the magus in venerating Anahita-Aphrodite (Sanskrit: Abhrasthita), for a shrine to that female divinity existed at Sigiriya (Paranavitana 1972: text 42–51, 56–7, 101, 105, 109–10). The Maga Brahmana died during the 17th year of Kassapa’s reign in 490.⁵

The Maga Brahmana’s religious affiliation is made explicit in the documents by his title of ‘Magian priest’ or Zoroastrian *mobed* and his references to Zoroastrian religious practices.⁶ Subsequent events surrounding his son provide additional confirmation. The Maga Brahmana’s son was not appointed to the position of royal counselor. He went back to Fars and then to Syria where he married a Christian woman and adopted Christianity himself. He subsequently returned to Senendiva and worked for the ouster of Kassapa. Because that son was no longer a Zoroastrian cleric, he became known as ‘the Christian monk (Sanskrit: *Kraistava-pasandena*) who had been a Magian priest (*Maga Brahmana*)’ (Paranavitana 1972: text 74, 77, 83).

Other sources corroborate a fairly constant Iranian presence on the resplendent land that also was known as Sielediba and Seledibal (Weerakkody

1997). One important document was produced by the Greek merchant Cosmas Indicopleustes of Alexandria who, when writing around the year 550 about his voyage to Taprobane, noted the country 'is visited by ships from all regions of India and Persia, and sends out many of its own ships' (McCrindle 1887: 11.365). Cosmas recorded trade between China, India, Iran, and Africa in 'silk, aloe, cloves, and sandalwood' among other commodities passing through Sielediba. Because it was 'located at the center of the Indian Ocean,' Cosmas commented, the island 'receives imports from all the commercial hubs and, in turn, exports to them and so is itself a great hub of commerce' (McCrindle 1887: 11.366–368). Focusing on contacts between Sinhalese elites and Iranian traders, Cosmas observed that 'horses are brought from Persia to the king and he buys them, exempting the importers from customs duties' (McCrindle 1887: 11.372). He mentioned the presence of a Nestorian Christian community of Iranians residing in Taprobane possibly as traders, as well as an incident where a local ruler who encountered Iranians and Romans preferred the gold coinage of the latter over the silver currency of the former (McCrindle 1887: 11.368–370). Numismatic evidence from late antiquity supports the presence of Sasanian and Roman coins as trade currency on the island (Bopearachchi 1993: 71–81).

Cosmas even commented on the gemstones of Ceylon (McCrindle 1887: 11.364). A later Byzantine writer, Theophylactus Simocattes (Theophylact Simocatta) (lived ca. late 580s–640), also indicated in his *History* that pearls and gems from the Indian subcontinental region – probably obtained through trade with Ceylon – were utilized in Sasanian regalia (Whitby and Whitby 1986: 5.1.8). The Roman encyclopedist Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus, lived 23–79) already had written of such precious items in his *Natural History* (Mayhoff 1967: 6.24.81, 89). Even earlier the Greek historian Strabo (lived ca. 64 BCE–23 CE) had noted, in his *Geography*, hearing about the export of ivory and tortoise shells from Taprobane (Jones 1917: 2.1.14).

Late Sasanian era and medieval Islamic era stamp seals and glazed ceramics from Iran, including a sixth- or seventh-century sealing with the Middle Persian epigraph of a magus, have been recovered from archeological excavations between 1886 and 1984 at the port site of Mantai. Mantai (now Mantota) was a major international maritime entrepôt on Serendib's north-west coast where foreign merchants and travelers resided (Prickett 1982: 3, 1984: 3–4; Carswell and Prickett 1984: 21, 52, 55, 57, 59–62; Carswell 1990, 1991; Prickett-Fernando 1990a: 64, 68, 71, 82–4, 1990b: 117, 119; Charvát 1993).⁷ The evidence from Mantai, like that from Sigiriya and from the writings of classical authors, suggests that Zoroastrian presence on the Indian subcontinent and communal designation as *Parsis* (< Sanskrit: *Parasika*, *Parsika*) predate the landing of Persians at Sanjan in Gujarat (attributed to the year 716 or 936), which is described in the *Qessa-ye Sanjan* or Story of Sanjan (see Williams and Nanji in this volume).

Few sources are available to determine the extent of Zoroastrian involvement in trade, politics, and social activities on the resplendent land during centuries immediately following the Arab Muslim conquest of Iran (in the seventh century). There is no evidence that descendents of the mercenaries who served Dhatusena and Kassapa returned to Iran, so they must have continued their confessional and cultural mores in Senendiva for some time thereafter. Eventually, perhaps those Iranian families on the island who practiced Zoroastrianism and Christianity intermarried with the local Sinhalese and Tamils who were Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian.

In the meantime, trade with Iran was bringing Muslims to Serendib. Again, mercantile communities of Iranian extraction, although not necessarily Zoroastrian by devotion, can be documented along the coastline from the 700s onward (Curtin 1984: 108, 132). Essentially it seems that the overland and maritime links between Iran, India, and Senendiva never were severed; only the confessional allegiance of many Iranians traversing those routes gradually switched from Zoroastrianism to Islam between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. A trilingual inscription in Chinese, Tamil, and Persian was discovered at the southern port of Galle in 1911. It had been inscribed at Nanjing in 1409 and erected at Galle in 1411 to commemorate the second visit to Serendib by the Ming Chinese Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho). The choice of Persian reveals that language's substantial usage in Ceylon, at least by the residents of maritime entrepôts. The inscription mentions Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam (specifically the 'light of Islam'), but not Zoroastrianism (Paranavitana 1933). Yet, through the presence of the Persian text, it attests to continuity of contact between Serendib and Iran during the fifteenth century.

Premodern Cilao and early modern Zeilan

The major source of information on Zoroastrians in premodern Cilao and early modern Zeilan is records compiled by Kaikhusru D. Choksy (1863–1938). K. D. Choksy was a friend of the Indian Zoroastrian scholar Jivanji J. Modi, and the two worked together during December 1923 and January 1924 when some of A.-H. Anquetil du Perron's papers were discovered in Colombo (Modi 1925: 54–7, 67–70; K. D. Choksy 1934: 24). Portions of the research by K. D. Choksy, preserved in a series of notes in English and Gujarati and a succinct publication in English, were incorporated by Framroz Rustomjee (1896–1978), Tehmuras R. Rustomjee (1905–86), Behram K. Billimoria (d. 1989), and Roshan Peiris into their own manuscripts (F. Rustomjee 1975: 3; T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 3; Peiris 1984: 20; Billimoria 1988: 1, 17, 1999a: 76).⁸

Regular movement of persons and goods during the sixteenth century along the trade route from Iran and the Persian Gulf, down the west coast of India via Goa, Calicut (Kozhikode), and Cochin (now Kochi), to the

Serendib ports of Mannar, Colombo, and Galle is attested by the accounts of western travelers like Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna who reached the island sometime between 1504 and 1506 (Hulugalle 1965: 49, 52). Those interconnections must have brought at least a few Zoroastrians to Serendib because traces of their presence become unmistakable yet again by the 1600s. The trade goods that drew them to the island included cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, gemstones, timber, and even elephants (Curtin 1984: 141).

Gravestones attest that Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrian sailors and maritime merchants reached the Portuguese and Dutch controlled parts of the island, the kingdom of Jaffna, and the kingdom of Kandy (K. D. Choksy 1934: 8; F. Rustomjee 1974: 1, 1975: 1, 3; Billimoria 1988: 2a–3a, 1999a: 73–4, 76; J. K. Choksy 2004: 51). The ‘gravestones appear to have been erected by Sinhalese’ after the demise of a few of those Zoroastrians. Each grave faced ‘east on the east coast, west on the west coast’ toward the rising or setting sun respectively. The reason for that placement was mentioned on a gravestone as reflecting the deceased man’s routine of ‘performing devotion (Sinhala: *puja*) to the sun.’ Ardeshir Bahmanshah, who is recorded as having become a fisherman by occupation after settling on the island, was buried on the outskirts of Matara in 1603. The gravestone of Dinyar Shapur dates from 1632 at the trading town of Mannar where he may have been a merchant. Shahriyar was said on his gravestone in 1686 to have been shipwrecked near Tangalla on a voyage from Hormuzd, perhaps Hormuz island in the Persian Gulf. A grave marker outside Batticaloa, also oriented to the rising sun, mentions that the dead man (whose name was illegible) arrived via ship from Soorata, probably Surat, in 1727 (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 4–6). When broad-gauge railway tracks were laid along the coastline during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fueling urban expansion of coastal hamlets into towns, the graves disappeared under construction. Nevertheless those mortuary records, of personal names and acts of public piety (possibly involving the *Khwarshed* and *Aban Yashts* and *Niyayishns*), provide traces of premodern Zoroastrian settlers.

As in ancient times, the Sinhalese and Tamil populations ‘were hospitable to the new arrivals.’ Essentially, Parsis had begun ‘migrating in larger numbers from India’ to work as ‘planters and shopkeepers.’ Again ‘stray burials’ dating to the mid-eighteenth century, especially ‘in the eastern and central provinces,’ were present as late as the 1930s at Kandy, Gampola, Maha Oya, and Ampara as the settlers spread inland. Some graves were seen by Nariman K. Choksy (1896–1973).⁹ In these cases, too, urban expansion overran cemeteries where people like Manekjee Khurshedjee who died near Matale in 1750 were buried. Some Parsi settlers became money-lenders, extending credit to Sinhalese, Tamil, and Moor merchants before commercial banks were prevalent (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 6–9, 12, 1934: 8; F. Rustomjee 1974: 1, 1975: 1–3; T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 2–3; Peiris 1984: 20; Billimoria 1988: 3a).

In addition to Zoroastrians arriving from Iran and India, there also were official Iranian ambassadors to the court of the kings of Kandy. The pomp and protocol involved with one such ambassador's visit was documented by Christopher Schweitzer while working in Zeilan for the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC (Dutch East India Company) between 1676 and 1681 (Hulugalle 1965: 68).

British colonial Ceylon

John Pybus, the first representative from the British East India Company to the Kandyan kingdom of Ceylon in 1762, described the Sinhalese monarch Kirti Sri Rajasimha (Rajasingha ruled 1747–82) on the occasion of an audience being granted, as enthroned upon a Persian carpet behind a curtain which would be drawn up to reveal the ruler (Hulugalle 1965: 90–1). The impact of ancient Iranian imperial protocol assimilated by the Sinhalese through contact with Iranian magi, mercenaries, diplomats, and merchants is unmistakable (Choksy 1988: 42).

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, Parsi immigrants from India purchased land for commercial and residential purposes in the seaport of Colombo and for small plantation estates in the provinces. About 100 Parsi men worked as planters in the central province or hill country, near the cities of Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, and as merchants, particularly in the Fort or Kotuwa of Colombo (Choksy 2004: 51). Parsis gradually became major players in the transportation of durable and nondurable goods overland from the port and Fort of Colombo to coastal towns such as Mannar, Chilaw, Galle, Matara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee and to inland urban centers like Kurunegala, Kandy, Bandarawela, and Badulla. They also began to control maritime trade from Ceylonese ports to Male, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Chittagong, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Much of that trade was based on *hundies* or promissory notes (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 13–15; F. Rustomjee 1974: 2; Billimoria 1999b: 50).

One early entrepreneur in the Fort was Dady Hirjee, also known as Dady Muncherjee (Mancherji) and Dady Parsi, 'general merchant and commission agent.' He was active at King's Street (late Queen's Street) between the years 1798 and 1815 auctioning items confiscated by the Ceylon Customs Department. Dady Hirjee's company also handled much of the transportation of goods in and out of the port of Colombo. By 1803, Hormusjee Espandiarjee Khambata (Khambatta) was running a company at 15 Baillie Street in the Fort and also at the commercial locale called Pettah or Pita Kotuwa, both in the heart of Colombo city, to import items from China and Europe using three ships owned by him. His mercantile contacts also extended along the Malabar coast of India. Hormusjee even pioneered the processing of cane sugar for commercial use and sale in Ceylon. Other initial entrepreneurs were the brothers Dhunjeeshah (Dhanjishah, Dhanjishaw)

and Jamshedjee Ruttonjee Captain, whose ships sailed between Colombo, Bombay, and ports of the Malabar coast in 1805–12, and Sorabjee Pestonjee, who arrived at Colombo from Bombay in 1807 (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 15–18, 1934: 8; F. Rustomjee 1974: 1–3, 1975: 4; Billimoria 1988: 1, 3–5, 1999a: 73, 78–84, 1999b: 50).

A complication arose in the form of an edict prohibiting the purchase of land in most neighborhoods of Colombo and in the hinterland. Parsis, already owning property in those areas and wishing to expand their holdings, successfully petitioned for a revoking of that edict by the British colonial authorities (Billimoria 1999b: 49–50). Plantations in the provinces produced spices and coconut that Parsi merchants like Narimanjee Eduljee Hormazjee (Hormusji), who had come from Surat during the year 1811, exported to India and China. Sorabjee Ruttonjee joined that mercantile trade in 1812. Another merchant who achieved affluence by specializing in the maritime trade of spices and coconut products through Colombo was Dinyarjee Barjorjee who had relocated there from India in 1813. His mercantile operations were continued, after Dinyarjee's demise, by a son Tehmurasp and a son-in-law Kaikobad (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 17; F. Rustomjee 1974: 1–3, 1975: 4–6; Billimoria 1988: 1–2). Parsi shipbuilders at Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Galle, and Colombo were commissioned to construct brigs to carry those products overseas (F. Rustomjee 1975: 4–5; Billimoria 1988: 6). Unlike the aforementioned products, trade in opium – a commodity through which particular Parsi families in India amassed financial fortunes – is poorly documented among the Zoroastrians of Ceylon.

By 1828, Parsis like Cowasjee Eduljee Colombowalla had begun purchasing commercial coffee plantations. Cowasjee Eduljee eventually owned the Wewassa and Debedde Estate that encompassed 815 acres. Cowasjee, who had come to Colombo from Bombay and Cochin in the 1820s, also ran the firm that later became known as Nowrojee Pallonjee and Company (after it was taken over by one of Cowasjee's assistants, Nowrojee Pallonjee Kapadia) at 4th Cross Street. Like Parsi merchants before him, Cowasjee commissioned the construction of ships to carry the trade goods produced by his business. In addition, like many Parsi immigrants of those times, Cowasjee eventually retired back to Bombay where he died in 1887. Hormusjee Eduljee Panday, who died in 1827, had partnered with Cowasjee. Hormusjee traveled from Colombo to Madras and Shanghai every five years to sell coffee, and also pearls harvested from Ceylon's coastal pearl banks. Parsi involvement with the commercial growth, processing, and export of coffee continued until that industry was devastated by leaf disease (coffee rust) during the coffee blight of 1860s. Then they shifted attention to the management of tea estates and the processing of tea leaves for drinking. Due to trade in coffee, tea, and other consumer goods, the firm of 'Messrs. Cowasjee Eduljee and Hormusjee' became 'one of the first subscribers to the Kandy Mail Coach Company' in 1832 after a modern road to that central hill-city had been built

by the British. Parsi involvement with the plantation industry continued with Kaikhusroo Hormusjee who arrived in Ceylon, with his wife and children around the year 1850, and purchased the Navagala Estate in Matale District (K. D. Choksy 1934: 8; F. Rustomjee 1975: 6; Billimoria 1988: 2–3, 8–10, 1999a: 73, 1999b: 50; partially Stausberg 2002: 275).

Proceedings of the first meeting of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (Records: 16) on February 20, 1839, indicate that two Parsis, Hormusjee Espandiarjee Khambata and Shapurjee Hirjee, were ‘the only non-British representatives among twelve mercantile firms elected to membership.’ The brothers Framjee and Dinshawjee Bhikhajee had relocated to Colombo in 1817. By 1890, their company, namely, Framjee Bhikhajee Khan and Partners – trading under the name of Framjee Bhikhajee and Company – had been elected to membership of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (Records: 20).

Framjee Bhikhajee and Company was active in export of durable goods, including coconut oil (processed by the Colombo Oil Mills at Grandpass) and coffee using its own ships. That corporation constructed houses for its managerial staff, many of whom were Parsis from India. Gradually, the firm expanded its property holdings to include Framjee House in the seaside neighborhood of Kollupitiya and a large shopping mall located on the corner of Main and China Streets in the Pettah. Framjee Bhikhajee and Company also specialized in the importation of European liquors for sale in Ceylon. Its mercantile and banking networks spanned the globe – from the United States of America, England, and western Europe to China, Japan, and Australia. The company became the largest recruiter of Parsis from India, east Africa, and southeast Asia to Ceylon.

K. D. Choksy arrived in Ceylon from Bombay during 1884 as an employee of Framjee Bhikhajee and Company. Born and educated in Surat, he had joined that company in 1882. In Colombo, he served as the firm’s book-keeper, then as manager from 1895, and finally as corporate attorney until his demise in 1938. When the Indian Chamber of Commerce consisting of Bohra, Parsi, and Sindhi merchants was established in Colombo during the 1920s, K. D. Choksy served as its first elected President for approximately five years. Jawaharlal Nehru visited Ceylon in 1931 and when he was accorded a civic reception at the Colombo Town Hall, Choksy presided and delivered the welcome address as *de facto* leader of the island’s entire expatriate Indian community. K. D. Choksy also functioned as the Zoroastrian community’s unofficial historian, as a trustee from 1923, and as president of the trustees from 1929 (K. D. Choksy, 1884–1938: 13–16, 1934: 8; F. Rustomjee 1974: 3–5, 1975: 1–4; T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 3; Peiris 1984: 20–1; Billimoria 1988: 1, 10–14, 1999a: 73, 1999b: 50–2, 1999d: 40–1).

A report to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat by Muncherjee F. Khan noted the population of Parsi Zoroastrians in Ceylon during 1901 was 55 males and 40 females for a total of 95 adults and children (Billimoria 1988: 59).¹⁰ The 1911 census of India recorded that 106 male and 75 female Zoroastrians

were present in Ceylon, with 155 residing at Colombo, 5 in that city's suburbs, 12 at Kandy, and 9 elsewhere in the country (Billimoria 1988: 59; Stausberg 2002: 276). Many of those families maintained close ties with their relatives in India, often returning there to arrange marriages. An example was Rustomjee Muncherjee, who arrived in Ceylon around the year 1860 from the port city Aden (now in Yemen), where he had served the Adenwalla Company. In Colombo, Muncherjee worked first for Framjee Bhikhajee and Company earning Rupees 15 plus room and board per month. He gained education in English at the Royal Academy (earlier Colombo Academy, later Royal College) in the Cinnamon Gardens neighborhood of Colombo. Next, Muncherjee worked in the textile industry at Kandy; eventually, he established his own corporation for importing cooking oil and flour from India and Australia, and his company also supplied gold and silver thread for ornate clothing. Having originated from Bombay, Muncherjee returned home to marry a Parsi bride, who came with him to Ceylon in 1869. Residing in Ceylon thereafter, Rustomjee Muncherjee served as a trustee of community funds until his demise in 1929 (F. Rustomjee 1975: 3, 4; Billimoria 1999c: 45–6).

Anjuman or community association records list numerous Parsis relocating between India and Ceylon between the late 1880s and the early 1900s, keeping the local community's demographic numbers in flux. For instance, Dadabhoy Nasserwanjee came to Colombo from Surat and Bombay in 1871. He worked in the printing department of the *Times of Ceylon* newspaper for a few years, returned to Bombay for marriage, then came back to Ceylon in 1880. When business transactions resulted in unpaid debt, Nasserwanjee moved to the Maldiv Islands where he served as Private Secretary to the Sultan of the Maldives in 1899. But he was arrested by British troops and shipped back to Colombo, on orders of the British governor of Ceylon, to settle unpaid debts. In Ceylon, Nasserwanjee filed legal action for illegal arrest and imprisonment against the captain of the ship that had brought him back to Colombo and 'was awarded nominal damages.' He traveled frequently between Ceylon and India dealing in tea, coconut oil, spices, rice, and kerosene while championing workers' rights through labor unions (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 19; F. Rustomjee 1975: 11–13; Billimoria 1988: 20). Other Parsi entrepreneurs of that era who maintained both business and personal connections with India, traveling back and forth, included Jamshedjee Rustomjee and Pallonjee N. Kapadia. Rustomjee was a commodities merchant who had arrived in Ceylon from Billimoria in India with his wife Veerbaijee in 1877. Kapadia had joined his father's corporation of Nawrojee Kapadia and Company in 1891, importing wheat flour and sugar. Eduljee S. Captain, another Parsi from India, served as general manager of the Wellawatta Spinning and Weaving Mills from its establishment in 1914 until 1966, even after it became publicly owned in 1955 (F. Rustomjee 1975: 6–7; Peiris 1984: 23; Billimoria 1988: 22, 59, 1999d: 41).

Between 1930 and 1945, the Zoroastrian population in British Ceylon ranged from 350 to 450 Parsis (Peiris 1984: 22; Billimoria 1988: 59; Stausberg 2002: 276). By then the community had been emphasizing secular education for several decades. Both male and female children were sent to primary and secondary schools run by private organizations, Christian missions, and the state. Upon completion of schooling, they were encouraged to attend universities in Ceylon, India, and England. Educated Parsi men took up professions such as law and medicine. Rustomjee Muncherjee's son was educated as a physician and surgeon in England, returning to practice at Colombo in 1904 (F. Rustomjee 1975: 4). K. D. Choksy was among the first Ceylonese Zoroastrians to obtain electricity service to a private residence, during the first decade of the 1900s, so that his son N. K. Choksy could study indoors after dark with adequate lighting (rather than by candle light or by the light of a street lamp) and become an attorney. Parsi women, like the men, routinely completed secondary education at secular schools and began enrolling in, and graduating from, Ceylonese universities. Those women began to play prominent roles in garnering resources for furthering the knowledge, professional training, social welfare, and exposure to western medicine and science of their cohorts (Choksy 2002: 108–10, 2004: 51).

The Jilla family established Colombo Dye Works for providing textile dyes and dry-cleaning in 1911. Insurance businesses were established as well, beginning in 1898 with the arrival of Dinshaw P. Billimoria from India. Rustomjee Muncherjee had established Rustomjee and Company, 'Bakers and Confectioners,' in 1875. Limjeebhoy Billimoria acquired the bakery in 1884, renaming it the Ceylon Bakery. Pestonjee E. Billimoria, who came to Ceylon at the end of the nineteenth century, worked at the Ceylon Bakery, then founded the Kaiser Bakery (renamed Britannia Bakery after World War I) at the corner of York and Chatham Streets (later relocated to Hospital Street) in the Fort of Colombo, and also served successfully as a ship chandler. Parsis in Ceylon even dabbled in the entertainment industry, operating the Majestic, Empire, and Elphinstone movie theaters in Colombo during the early and mid-twentieth century for the Calcutta-based, Parsi-owned, company of Madan Theatres Ltd. A Ceylon Parsi, Darabshaw Daruwalla, relocated to Rangoon in Burma, to establish cinemas there (F. Rustomjee 1975: 4; Peiris 1984: 24; Billimoria 1988: 13, 29–30, 40, 46, 49, 1999c: 48, 1999d: 42).

Members of the second generation of the Khan family of commercial fame held appointments on the Colombo Municipal Council during the first and second decades of the twentieth century (K. D. Choksy 1934: 8; F. Rustomjee 1975: 2). Jehangirjee K. Hormusjee was appointed a member of the Colombo Municipal Council in April 1917 and served until his demise in October 1918. Faramroze Dadabhoy served on the Colombo Municipal Council as a nominated member during the late 1930s and 1940s (Peiris 1984: 29; Billimoria 1988: 3, 40). Paralleling the concern for public well-being

demonstrated by their coreligionists in India, Dady Hirjee was involved with establishment of the Ceylon Literary Society to which he donated a set of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1820. The Bhikhajee and Khan families donated wards to the Colombo General Hospital. The Khans endowed prizes in economics and medicine at the university in Colombo and even donated a prominent public landmark, the Khan Clock Tower, in the Pettah (Peiris 1984: 30; Billimoria 1988: 5, 12, 1999b: 51) (Figure 10.3).

Independent Ceylon and the Republic of Sri Lanka

National statehood affected demography when Ceylon became independent from Great Britain in 1947 because nearly 50 percent of the Parsi community chose to return to India; the rest became citizens of Ceylon (Choksy 2004: 51). When Sinhala became the official language of Ceylon in 1956, many



Figure 10.3 Khan Memorial Clock Tower.

Zoroastrians who were much more fluent in English than Sinhala began migrating to Australia (Peiris 1984: 22; indirectly Hinnells 2005: 556, 558). Emigration from Ceylon, which became the Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972, continued as Zoroastrians sought educational and economic opportunities in the USA and Canada. Consequently, the community's population fell to 84 individuals in 1984 and to 60 by 1988 (Peiris 1984: 22; Billimoria 1988: 59).

By the 1950s, as a legacy of secular western education, the Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka had begun to use English as their main language, while most of them also spoke, read, and wrote in Sinhala as well, and many in Tamil. During the 1930s and 1940s, the community had commissioned the services of Parsi Gujarati language instructors from Bombay so that their children were multilingual (Peiris 1984: 22, 25). Use of Gujarati declined as Zoroastrians in modern Ceylon and Sri Lanka found fewer opportunities to communicate in it, and today only a rudimentary spoken ability and more often only an elementary, passive understanding of Gujarati survives. Use of Persian has never been common as a spoken or written language among the Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka (Peiris 1984: 10). Another consequence of westernization was that their dress increasingly became western in style, although Zoroastrian women still wear saris on formal occasions.

University-level education served as a mechanism for Zoroastrians becoming established prominently in Ceylon. Adoption of English as their public language, in addition to assimilation of European mores, was reinforced via secular university education. That education transmitted to them knowledge, values, aspirations, and opportunities which had become a part of European societies during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The education, with its concomitant language and cultural facets, provided smooth entry into a rapidly westernizing and secularizing urbane Ceylonese society. In that society, the Parsis began to make their mark as learned, enterprising, elites who were loyal to the democratically elected civil administration.

Their choice of professions – especially law, medicine, and public service – was shaped by university education and influenced by aspirations for social advancement. Parsis involved with the legal profession included Justices of the Peace such as K. D. Choksy and Pestonjee D. Khan, proctors such as F. Rustomjee and B. K. Billimoria, and Queen's Counsels such as N. K. Choksy (whose wife Khorshed was the granddaughter of Pallonjee and Meherbai Kapadia by their daughter Aimai who married Cowasjee Lakdawalla), who subsequently served Ceylon as a Justice of the Supreme Court. Homi F. Billimoria, who was the first Ceylonese to graduate from Liverpool University and be elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, designed the Independence Hall at Colombo and a palatial house that became the official residence of the Speaker of Parliament. He served as Chief Architect to the Government of Ceylon from 1953 to 1956. His architectural contributions were recognized by King George VI, who appointed him a Member of the British Empire in 1951, and Queen Elizabeth II, who conferred

on him a Coronation Medal in 1953 and appointed him an Officer of the British Empire in 1954 while Ceylon was part of the British Commonwealth. Nariman N. Jilla, like other Parsis contributing to the new nation's administration, was a member of the Ceylon Civil Service during the 1950s and 1960s. On the medical front, Dr Rustam Pestonjee served as Director-in-Charge of the Leprosy Asylum at Hendala, Dr Khurshed D. Rustomjee worked with the anti-malaria campaign and the Cancer Society, and Dr Jamshed Dadabhoy became Chief Surgeon at the Colombo Eye Hospital. In the field of education, Kaikhusroo F. Billimoria functioned admirably as the first Principal of Dharmaraja College in Kandy until his retirement in 1933 (K. D. Choksy 1934: 8; Peiris 1984: 24–6; Billimoria 1988: 12, 17, 23–5, 33–7, 40, 43–4, 51–3, 61–2, 1999a: 73, 1999c: 46, 48, 1999d: 41, 2000a: 47–8; partially Stausberg 2002: 275–6). In each instance, the choice of profession enhanced the socioeconomic stature for the individual, his or her immediate family, and his or her descendants by contributing to Ceylonese society.

Rise in status brought with it civic obligations, and public generosity of money and commitment of time by Parsis to Ceylon's society continued in the period after independence from the British. Perin Billimoria established the K. F. Billimoria Memorial Trust Fund for scholarships at Dharmaraja College in honor of her late husband's principalship there. Ruttonshah Rustomjee Bhoory, whose firm of Ruttonshah Rustomjee and Company exporters of tea, spices, and coconut products was elected to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce in 1944, donated classrooms to Wesley College at Colombo in gratitude for education received (Peiris 1984: 30; Billimoria 1988: 5, 12, 1999b: 51, 2000a: 48, 50, 52; Records: 28). Dosabhoy Marker, who immigrated to Ceylon from Peshawar and Quetta (now in Pakistan) in 1904 and became a successful rice broker, built a lecture hall for the Ramakrishna Mission in the Wellawatta neighborhood of Colombo (Billimoria 1988: 53, 2000a: 48). N. K. Choksy and F. Rustomjee, among others, took active roles in the Theosophical Society and the Order of Freemasons (compare Stausberg 2002: 276).

Organizations and practices

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a range of endowed funds and trusts existed to maintain the ritual, social, and funerary needs of the Zoroastrians in Ceylon. Trustees who managed those funds were appointed rather than elected. Appointments were usually made by consensus, but one disagreement had to be decided in court. That case arose between 1912 and 1915 when Pestonjee D. Khan, who had served as the sole trustee for about two decades, resigned due to ill-health and departed for Bombay. After unsuccessfully requesting Khan to reconsider, the community nominated Rustomjee Muncherjee, Jehangirjee Hormusjee, and Jamshedjee Rustomjee as trustees. An opposing group challenged those nominations.

The dispute was taken to the District Court of Colombo and subsequently through appeal to the Supreme Court of Ceylon. Those courts ruled that the original meeting and the appointment of the three trustees were in order. Muncherjee served as president of the Anjuman until his demise in 1929. Not all members of the community accepted the court's decision. Dinshaw P. Billimoria was one who 'waged many battles . . . with the trustees' during the early twentieth century (F. Rustomjee 1975: 4; 1977: 5; Billimoria 1988: 40, 1999c: 46).

The Ceylon Parsi Anjuman was established in 1939 to consolidate control and administration of the hitherto separate trusts and funds for fire temple, priests and rituals, and funerary sites. A Scheme of Management for the funds was outlined to the community on November 30, 1924, and was adopted at a general meeting on March 6, 1939 (T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 4; Stausberg 2002: 275; Choksy 2004: 51). The Anjuman is based at the community's prayer hall called Navroz-Baug. Three trustees are elected every five years by the voting members of the Anjuman. Modest funds are generated through annual membership fees and voluntary donations for community activities and maintenance of Anjuman properties. The Anjuman maintains written records relating to the Zoroastrian community

The Anjuman retains the services of a *mobed* or Zoroastrian priest, appropriately trained and ordained in India, who conducts rituals for the *behdins* or laity. Occasionally, among the community, additional *mobeds* are present who are not full-time and are engaged in other professions (Choksy 2004: 52). The Colombo Parsi Priest Maintenance Fund had been started in 1910–11 to pay for rental of prayer halls for the community and residential quarters for visiting priests. As a result, Ervad Sohrabji Maneckji Dastur Meherji Rana served as a visiting *panthaki* (or 'family priest') from India to Colombo in 1910. The first resident community *mobed* was hired in 1912, also from among the Zoroastrian clerics of Bombay. Pallonjee N. Kapadia provided the impetus to ensure that 'clerical oversight of rites became standard' among Ceylonese Zoroastrians. Thereafter, a permanent location for Zoroastrian devotions was constructed in 1927 on approximately a third of an acre of land at 40 Fifth Lane, Kollupitiya, through an endowment by Meherbai Kapadia in memory of her husband Pallonjee (Figure 10.4b shows their portraits hanging on either side of an image of the prophet Zarathushtra). The Parsi architect Homi F. Billimoria designed the *agiari* or fire temple there called Navroz-Baug (Figure 10.4a) (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 22–4; F. Rustomjee 1975: 7–9; T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 4; Peiris 1984: 21–2; Billimoria 1988: 35–6, 1999a: 73, 1999d: 41; Stausberg 2002: 274–5).

Navroz-Baug includes residential quarters for the *mobed* and his family. Because they live on an island and their priests are hired from India, Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka (unlike their coreligionists in India) do not regard the *'amal* or ritual power of clergy as being vitiated by the act of crossing water by ship or plane. In another adaptation to circumstances, arising from



Figure 10.4a Navroz-Baug Fire Temple.

Zoroastrians having always been a tiny minority in Sri Lanka, only when religious services occur is access to the prayer hall confined to Zoroastrians, for the practical reason that the caretaker in residence at the fire temple is usually Sinhalese of Buddhist or Christian affiliation. The Anjuman also augments its trust funds by leasing commercial buildings, adjacent to the rear wall of Navroz-Baug, to businesses run by non-Zoroastrians; this is done without the traditional Zoroastrian concern about the danger of ritual pollution by non-Zoroastrians to Zoroastrian precincts.

Navroz-Baug centers around a prayer hall where votive rituals are conducted in the presence of a *dadgah* or hearth fire on a small metal *afrinaganyu* (*afarganyu*) or altar (Figure 10.4b). The fire is lit from a *divo* or oil lamp prior to religious rites, and then fed with *sukhar* or sandalwood and *loban* or frankincense by the officiating priest and by devotees. An ancillary eastern veranda is utilized for communion through consumption of consecrated fruits such as mangoes, bananas, and pineapples, and cooked foods such as *malida* or sweet meats and *papri* or flat wafers after recitation of a *baj* or antiphonal chant in the name of god (*be nam-e yazad*). Many outer rituals such as the *jashan* or thanksgiving service, *farokhshi* or recitation for the immortal spirits (*fravashis*) of deceased Zoroastrians, *uthamna* or propitiations on the third day after death, and *frawardigan* (*farvardegan*) or *mukhtad* commemorations for the souls of deceased persons during the last ten days of the Zoroastrian religious year are performed at the fire temple (Peiris 1984: 6, 9, 22; Choksy 2004: 52). *Gahanbars* or communal feasts, like that



Figure 10.4b Prayer Hall in Navroz-Baug Fire Temple.

endowed by Bhoory to be held annually around the date of his demise, occur at Navroz-Baug (Billimoria 1988: 56, 2000a: 52).

Following Parsi terminology, the initiation ritual for boys and girls is termed the *navjote*. *Navjotes* are officiated by one (more infrequently two) priest(s), and are conducted either at the fire temple, the sports club (see below), or at secular locations such as hotels. The Anjuman follows historically Irani and Parsi tradition by regarding religion as transmitted from one generation to another along patrilineal lines. Therefore, the Anjuman's charter defines a Zoroastrian as a person whose father was a Parsi Zoroastrian or Irani Zoroastrian and who, if an adult, has undergone the *navjote* initiation. Consequently, boys and girls whose fathers are Parsi Zoroastrian or Irani Zoroastrians can be initiated into the faith and their *navjotes* are recognized by the Anjuman which accords these individuals full rights within Sri Lanka's Zoroastrian community even when their mothers are not Zoroastrians. The Anjuman does not recognize the children of Zoroastrian mothers and non-Zoroastrians fathers as having valid claims to membership even if *navjotes* have been undergone. Those individuals (and there have been several such persons over the past 100 years) are not permitted into the fire temple during rituals, but they can attend any religious ceremony that is

not held at the fire temple (and consequently is open to the general public) including *navjotes* and funerals. They also can become members of the sports club (Choksy 2004: 52). An additional rule of the Anjuman precludes Parsi and Irani Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians from holding office as trustees. That rule ensures no change can be made to the Anjuman's existing definition of who is or is not a Parsi or Irani Zoroastrian (partially noted by Stausberg 2002: 278 n. 33). If the resident priest is unwilling to perform the *navjote* of a child whose father is a Zoroastrian but whose mother is a non-Zoroastrian, then a *mobed* who will perform the initiation is flown to Sri Lanka from India.

Basic rituals of purity are followed before prayer and rites of passage. Devotees perform the *padyab* purification, then the rite of untying and retying the *kusti* or holy cord, before entering the prayer hall.¹¹ The *Sade Nahn* is performed, usually in a bathroom, by each child prior to his or her *navjote*. A *Sade Nahn* is also undergone by every bride and groom prior to their marriage ceremony, where a *mobed* officiates if both partners are Zoroastrian. Purity codes surrounding sex, menstruation, and childbirth have largely fallen in to disuse during the last 25 years. Rules relating to hair, nails, breath, and saliva have not been practiced by Sri Lanka's Parsis – with the exception of ensuring purity of ritual fires – for over 50 years (Choksy 1989: 62–7, 80–103).

Property at Bloemendhal Road, Kotahena (a suburb of Colombo), was deeded to the community in 1826 by Cowasjee Eduljee for a funeral site. The Colombo Parsi Burial Ground Trust was established by deed No. 1179 on April 19, 1847, with trustees. A *dakhma* or funerary tower was constructed. But within a few years, exposure of corpses was phased out because of complaints from nearby residents that predatory and scavenging birds attracted to the human corpses allegedly were 'attacking pets and scattering human flesh (Sinhala: *mini mas*)' (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 20–2). Inhumation was introduced in an *aramgah* or place of repose (burial ground or cemetery) on the same property. As the *aramgah* at Bloemendhal Road became full, the community made plans for another funerary site at a different site. After 1861, the *dakhma* and *aramgah* at Bloemendhal Road were closed and walled off. Cowasjee Eduljee funded construction of the wall and the community retained control of the site until 1967 when it was sold (F. Rustomjee 1975: 6; partially T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 3, 4; partially Peiris 1984: 20, 21; Billimoria 1988: 8, 1999b: 50; Choksy 2004: 52). It is not clear how and where corpses were disposed for the next three decades – for it is unlikely that no deaths occurred – because relevant funerary records cannot be located.

Activity began in 1885 to obtain land at 28 Jawatta Road, Thimbirigasyaya (another neighborhood of Colombo), for a funeral grounds with an *aramgah*, *bungli* or building to perform final rites with a *sagri* or fire room, well, storage rooms for biers, and caretaker's residence (Figure 10.5a). Pestonjee D. Khan and his family assisted in that endeavor. Two and a half acres were

granted from crown land by the British government on June 13, 1887, subject to the condition that it be utilized only as a funerary site. The cost of constructing an *aramgah* and a caretaker's residence, and that of purchasing a metal funeral bier and ritual implements, were subsidized by the Khan family and by Framjee Bhikhajee and Company in 1894–1906. The two-storey funerary building was donated by Jamshedjee R. Billimoria in 1894 and the ritual pavilion was donated by his wife Veerbaijee in memory of her husband in 1904. The well for water used during funerary rites and purification was funded in 1896 by Phiroscha M. Nagla, who had been ordained as a priest in India prior to migrating to Ceylon (K. D. Choksy 1884–1938: 18, 21, 26; T. R. Rustomjee 1984: 4; Peiris 1984: 21; Billimoria 1988: 12, 23, 69–70, 1999b: 51, 1999d: 43; Stausberg 2002: 275). This circular *aramgah* was enclosed by a wall with a gated entrance so that it visually resembled a *dakhma* (it may even have been used for exposure of corpses for a few years while the community made preparations for burials). The burial area's base was lined with granulated rock, then topped with 6 to 7 feet of sand (in which the corpses were laid) to prevent ritual pollution. The earliest burial took place in the first *aramgah* at Jawatta Road in 1894; other burials followed (Figure 10.5b).

When that first *aramgah* became filled with graves, a second *aramgah* was constructed in 1921 on the Jawatta Road funeral grounds along similar ritual lines but surrounded by a rectangular wall. Burial occurs in rows, irrespective of gender, age, and family ties, by chronological order of demise (Figure 10.5c).



Figure 10.5a Funeral Grounds at Jawatta Road.



Figure 10.5b First Aramgah at Jawatta Road.



Figure 10.5c Second Aramgah at Jawatta Road.

Recently yet another *aramgah* was built on the Jawatta Road property, although it is not in use as yet. Now each corpse is surrounded with stone or concrete slabs to ritually protect the environment from pollution. The corpses are lowered into the graves using a metal winch to prevent ritual pollution from spreading to living persons. Gravestones mark each burial. Dogs are kept on the premises for the rite of *sagdid* to symbolically disperse any demons who may approach a corpse (Choksy 1998: 254). As in the case of the *dadgah*, the caretaker in residence at the *aramgah* is usually a Sinhalese of Buddhist or Christian confessional affiliation.

Walking funeral processions from a deceased's home to the *aramgah* continued into the late 1970s, but were discontinued as motorized and pedestrian traffic made such processional movement impractical and not conducive to maintaining ritual purity. So now each corpse is driven to the funerary site in a hearse followed by relatives and friends in a motorcade (Choksy 1998: 255). The community in Sri Lanka never had its own professional funerary workers, such as are customary in larger Zoroastrian communities, namely *pakshus* or corpse cleaners, *khandhias* or pall bearers (who transport the corpse to the cemetery), and *nasa salars* or corpse-bearers (who carry the corpse at the place of death and at the cemetery). All handling of corpses used to be performed by volunteers from among the Zoroastrian laity, who subsequently underwent purification via an abbreviated *Sade Nahn* (in which only ablutions were done). Those volunteers cleansed and dressed each corpse in white clothes, then covered it with a white funeral shroud. These activities were transferred gradually to professional, non-Zoroastrian, undertakers during the 1980s and 1990s. Such adaptations were not too controversial within the community. But the situation proved different regarding whether last rites and the *uthamna* ritual could be performed for a community member who died of medical complications due to AIDS and whose body was cremated by government health authorities. The situation was resolved by having the *uthamna* prayers performed in Bombay.

Religious education among the community in the 1960s and 1970s was championed by Framroz Rustomjee (1896–1978), son of Rustomjee Muncherjee, who produced a compendium of texts and translations entitled *Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians*, among other religious writings. Rustomjee was the instructor of choice for many Zoroastrian parents when it came time to have their children taught prayers in preparation for *navjotes*. In old age he eventually emigrated to Australia to join his son, who had been a surgeon in Ceylon, and grandchildren (Billimoria 1988: 17–19, 2000b: 43). Despite such attempts at religious education, orthopraxy declined as the community integrated within Sri Lankan society during the twentieth century. Most Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka know and recite the basic prayers – such as the *Ashem Vohu*, *Ahuna Vairya*, *Kem Na Mazda*, *Ohrmazd Khwaday* or *Kusti Bastan*, and *Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda* – essential for the *kusti* rite and for daily piety, but rely on Roman script texts in prayer manuals when reciting other litanies.

Flower garlands and coconuts used during religious rites would be tossed into the Indian Ocean; so too were damaged *kustis*. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Parsis would gather informally to recite prayers like the *Khwarshed* and *Mihr Niyayishns* facing the setting sun, but that practice declined in frequency. Likewise, until the late 1970s, traditionalists would recite the *Atash Niyayishn* to the hearth fire in their homes, often in conjunction with lighting a *divo* and carrying a fire in a small brazier through each room of the house during the *loban* or incense ritual. On the day dedicated to Ashi (the feminine *yazata* or worship-worthy spirit of recompense) in each month, Zoroastrians would visit the fire temple to recite the *Ard Yasht* or hymn in her honor. Given the financial and social success achieved by Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka, their minority status notwithstanding, this *yazata* and her *yasht* remain popular, but veneration now takes place at home (Choksy and Kotwal 2005: 223, 227, 240, 244–5).

The Parsi Sports Club began as the Parsi Youth's Sports Club in 1927, then changed its name to its present form a year later (Billimoria 1988: 17; Stausberg 2002: 275). Since 1947, it has occupied the Parasmani Hall (Figure 10.6) at 11 Palm Gove, Kollupitiya. The site was donated to the community by the scholar of Zoroastrianism, Framroz Rustomjee, in memory of a deceased young son. Ruttonshah Rustomjee Bhoory, who had come to Colombo at the age of 14 from Billimoria in India, funded construction of a single-storey clubhouse on that site in memory of his parents. The sports club, with facilities for badminton, tennis, and table tennis plus a banquet room, has its own



Figure 10.6 Parsi Sports Club.

trust deed and financial trust termed the Parsi Social Centre. It is administered by an elected board of trustees which can appoint members to planning committees. Unlike the fire temple, from which its governance and finances are separate, the Parsi Sports Club witnessed active involvement of women in its administration. For example, Piroja Billimoria, an avid tennis, table tennis, and cricket player, and daughter-in-law of Bhoory, was elected the first female president of the Parsi Sports Club (Peiris 1984: 29; Billimoria 1988: 18, 55–7, 2000a: 50–2, 54). Lectures on subjects of interest to the community, gatherings to play board games, sports events, and musical performances are still held at the Parsi Sports Club (Choksy 2004: 52).

Stage theater developed alongside sports as an organized social activity among Zoroastrians in Ceylon. Between 1911 and 1912, the Parsee Ripon Drama Company performed Shakespearian and Sinhalese plays in Colombo competing with traveling European theatrical companies for local audiences. Then in 1918, the Batiwalla Natak Company performed at Colombo and Kandy (Billimoria 1988: 29, 60–1; Stausberg 2002: 276). Both theater companies, reflecting the multicultural nature of Ceylonese society, drew actors from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Another social institution that embodied the goal of an ethnically integrated Ceylon was the Bombay Union Club, set up in 1905 at Prince Street in the Pettah. It possessed an ‘excellent library and reading room furnished with all the latest periodicals and papers,’ in addition to rooms for business meetings and social events (Billimoria 1988: 55, 2000a: 50).

Present trends

The total population of Zoroastrian men, women, and children within Sri Lanka numbered approximately 61 in the year 2006. Of these, 56 individuals were on the Anjuman’s membership roster; about five had not listed themselves with the Anjuman. Very occasionally the Anjuman receives news of other Zoroastrians who live in Sinhalese and Tamil villages. The Anjuman’s members are all Parsis, with no Iranians and no converts. The number of non-Zoroastrian spouses (husbands and wives) was approximately ten in 2006. Children of Zoroastrian women and non-Zoroastrian husbands numbered around five, but as noted previously those children are not recognized by the Anjuman’s trust deed as Zoroastrians. The last national census, conducted in July 2001, placed the total population at 18.73 million, so Zoroastrians comprise 0.0003256 per cent of the population of modern Sri Lanka! A majority of Sri Lankan Parsis trace ancestry to families who arrived in Ceylon during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as subjects of the British Raj. Most Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka have residences and family members in the west coast metropolis of Colombo, even though some of them work and reside in other parts of the country, such as the city of Kandy.

Marriage between Parsi Zoroastrian men and Sinhalese Buddhist, Burgher

Christian, and Tamil Hindu women began during the 1950s and has become increasingly frequent (Peiris 1984: 22–3). Approximately 50 per cent of children from such unions are raised as Zoroastrians and initiated into the faith. A few Parsis do frequent Christian churches, Hindu kovils, and Buddhist temples – in addition to the fire temple – claiming they are venerating the same god. On the other hand, conversion to Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam has never been a major force due to the sectarian nature of Sri Lankan society.

At present, the trustees of the Anjuman are Kairshasp N. Choksy, Piloo M. Lakdawalla, and Pesi N. Pestonjee. The Anjuman maintains and staffs the fire temple, funerary grounds, and sports club from funds collected through annual membership dues and donations. The elderly are generally cared for within the family unit, even in cases where they physically reside in retirement homes or hospice settings (Choksy 1998: 252). Therefore, the Anjuman does not maintain its own *dharamsala* or hospice. However, a few rooms adjacent to the priest's living quarters at Navroz-Baug are made available to visiting Zoroastrians, if requested, for short stays.

Most Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka graduate from high school, and many pursue university-level education. Professionally they have ranged, during the past few decades, from architects like Pheroze N. Choksy, attorneys like Vishtasp K. Choksy, and financial directors such as Piloo M. Lakdawalla of the Central Bank of Ceylon (later his service continued with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka), to naval officers, civil aviation officers, and army physicians like the brothers Homi N. Jilla, Kairshasp N. Jilla, and Minocher N. Jilla respectively (Peiris 1984: 25, 27; Billimoria 1988: 35, 37, 50, 1999d: 41, 2000b: 43). Major financial involvement in the economy of Sri Lanka has been accomplished by another long-settled mercantile family, the Pestonjees, in electronics and transportation from the 1970s onward through a nationwide company, Abans, which is named after its founder Aban Pestonjee. The Captain family, whose commercial beginnings lay in the textile industry, diversified first into paint and furniture manufacture and subsequently into corporate investments under Soli E. Captain (Peiris 1984: 24; Billimoria 1988: 35, 46; Patel 1999: 22, 27; Stausberg 2002: 276). Political involvement in the Republic of Sri Lanka occurred when Kairshasp N. Choksy, who is an attorney and President's Counsel, became a Member of Parliament, Minister of Constitutional Affairs, and subsequently Minister of Finance (Mama 2002: 57).

Social work by Parsi women such as Perin E. Captain, through organizations such as the Cancer Society and the Child Protection Society, has helped the nation considerably. Journalism with major daily newspapers in Colombo has been an occupation for insightful columnists such as Roshan Peiris. Education is a third field where Parsi women have contributed as teachers. Parsi men like Burjor Billimoria and Jamshed Nilgeria served as Presidents of the Sri Lanka Rotary Club. Cricket, golf, and table tennis have served as

sporting outlets for Zoroastrian boys and men from the Billimoria, Captain, Jilla, Lakdawalla, and Pestonjee families to contribute to Sri Lankan society (Peiris 1984: 27–8; Billimoria 1988: 46, 49, 56, 2000b: 56; Patel 1999: 27; Stausberg 2002: 275).

Generally, the ethno-religious conflicts between Sinhalese, Tamils, and Moors of the Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim faiths have not affected the Zoroastrian community directly. That particular situation is as true now as it was during the ethnic riots of 1915 (K. D. Choksy 1934: 8). Indirect consequences to economic and social activity are, on the other hand, a fact of life. The more recent (since 1983) ethnic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils, coupled with economic and socioreligious minority status for Zoroastrians in Iran plus conscription for military service during the Iran-Iraq war, produced another very infrequent but distressing development. Seeking the possibility of swifter processing for immigration to the United States, Canada, and Australia, a few Zoroastrian refugees reached Sri Lanka from Iran via India, ferried across the narrow Palk Strait by members of the secessionist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in exchange for payment. Those Iranians did not stay in Sri Lanka; rather they relocated to First World countries or returned to India or to Iran (Choksy 2006). On a more positive note, as Sri Lankan corporations established global alliances, a few Zoroastrians from other countries have begun to work in the island nation – augmenting the local Parsis who welcome their coreligionists to communal gatherings.

Settlement patterns and motivations

Three phases of settlement by Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians occurred in Ceylon. The first phase lasted from Antiquity into the Middle Ages as evidenced by the presence of maritime traders, mercenaries, and priests. The second phase lasted from 1600 into the late 1700s as attested by coastal and provincial gravestones of Iranian and Parsi sailors, planters, and petty traders. The third phase from the late 1700s to the present witnessed Parsi merchants and professionals immigrating from British India to establish a multi-generational community. On the other hand, the major reasons for migration away from the Zoroastrian community in modern Sri Lanka have been the rise of Sinhalese nationalism and the economic opportunities of the West.

Indian Ocean trade, Near Eastern and Asian politics, and European colonialism propelled the relocation of Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians to the island. Those movements of Zoroastrians, as individuals and groups, facilitated the transmission of ideas, industries, and mores. At each phase, Zoroastrians who settled on the island established diaspora communities that maintained ties with coreligionists in Iran, India, and East Asia. Trade in durable goods, visits to relatives in other Parsi diasporas, marriage between

individuals in the internationally scattered communities, recruitment of priests to staff the fire temple in Colombo and perform rituals, occasional pilgrimages to holy sites in India and Iran, and, most of all, cooperative goodwill between members of the diasporas, have ensured that ties endure across generations. The constant contact has ensured that the Zoroastrian diasporas have been highly permeable ones. Permeability and travel continues between the Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka and their families, friends, and business associates on a global scale.

Within Sri Lanka, Zoroastrians have been counselors who served ancient kings and ministers who guide modern governments, soldiers who served the country and physicians who cure the masses, traders who exported resources and industrialists who shape the economy. Their endeavors have been shaped by personal, communal, and altruistic goals – seeking betterment for themselves and for the country in which they live. In the words of a member of a family whose ancestors immigrated from India: ‘We are here on a beautiful island, and so we prosper when possible while having a good life and sharing Ahura Mazda’s generosity.’ So cultural identity and confessional allegiance have persisted albeit with modification to changing times and situations.

Regional and global economics – especially foreign markets for tea and spices plus domestic needs for credit and equipment – was clearly one major factor for the presence of the Zoroastrian diaspora in Ceylon. Local and international politics – in the forms of regnal struggles, European colonialism, and emergence of modern nation states – was another obvious factor that involved Iranians and Parsis in Sri Lankan affairs. Less apparent but equally important in the formation and maintenance of the diaspora was technology. Widespread technological advances – navigational, maritime, and more recently aviation – facilitated the travel of persons and the transportation of goods and ideas across large distances. Those and other innovations in technology permitted the maintenance of personal and professional ties across chronological and geographical boundaries spanning Iran, India, and the island from antiquity to modernity. Finally familiarity or knowledge about the resplendent land – from at least Achaemenian times onward – as a place of opportunity ensured that the immigrants never were relocating to a strange land but were traveling along paths their ancestors once had followed. Very much a product of maritime – and, most recently, aviation – voyages, the activities and aspirations of Zoroastrians from Iran and India who visited or settled on the bejeweled island in the Indian Ocean are reflected aptly in words attributed to another pioneering explorer, Sir Francis Drake (lived ca. 1540/1543–1596): ‘When thou givest to thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same unto the end until it be thoroughly finished.’

Notes

- 1 On the broader cultural, economic, and social impact of this trade see Chaudhuri 1985 and Kearney 2004.
- 2 Spellings of personal names have been retained as found in the original documents. I am grateful to K. N. Choksy and P. L. Stansky for suggestions.
- 3 Buddhmitra (Ananda-sthavira) of Suvarnnapura (now Palembang in Indonesia), an advisor to the Sinhalese king Parakramabahu VI (ruled 1412–67), utilized official chronicles of Dhatusena and Kassapa to produce the Sanskrit accounts recorded on stone by royal command (Paranavitana 1972: iii–vii).
- 4 Some of the texts' references to Iranian history and architecture have been discussed by Brown 2005: 40–2. Interestingly, the name Kuvera also denotes the Hindu divinity of wealth, directional guardian of the north, whose mythical abode lay in Ceylon. So Dhatusena and Kassapa may have been emulating both the king Cyrus and the god Kuvera.
- 5 Paranavitana 1972: translation 83 n. 20, suggests the seventh regnal year or 480.
- 6 Clarke 1978: 34, indirectly noted this religious affiliation in a fictionalized setting where the king is named Kalidasa and the Persian who designed the rock-top palace, frescos, and gardens is named Firdaz: 'The sun, Kalidasa knew, was the god of the Persians and those words Firdaz was murmuring must be a prayer in his language.'
- 7 The unpublished magian sealing was examined by the author (J. K. Choksy) in 1987. Presence of the Nestorian community from Iran is confirmed by archeological objects as well.
- 8 Billimoria and the present author, J. K. Choksy (paternal great-grandson of K. D. Choksy), collaborated in 1985 to locate K. D. Choksy's 1934 publication and some unpublished notes.
- 9 Many decades later, N. K. Choksy communicated his observations to Billimoria who passed them on to this author in 1985.
- 10 Stausberg 2002: 274–8, who drew upon the draft compilation by Billimoria (1988) rather than the published version (1999a–2000b), inadvertently gave the year as 1905.
- 11 See further Choksy 1989: 53–62 with figure 7, showing a Parsi performing the *padyab* at Navroz-Baug while facing east toward the sun.

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ZOROASTRIANS IN EUROPE 1976 TO 2003

Continuity and change

Gillian Mary Towler Mehta

Introduction

In September 2003, I conducted a survey of Zoroastrians in Europe that built on and expanded the scope of previous surveys conducted in 1976 and 1985. The combined responses allow detailed analysis of the continuity and change of attitudes to their religion over nearly three decades.

For the first time, the 2003 survey included questions concerning certain Zoroastrian purity laws about which there has been no previous research in the UK.¹ Purity is at the heart of the Zoroastrian religion: actions of humans must not pollute fire, earth, air and water. This chapter focuses on the views of the surveyed group relating to Zoroastrian purity laws and their affirmation or rejection by the members of this group.

Background

The 2003 survey questionnaire is based on the 1976 survey carried out by Professor John Hinnells under the auspices of the Department of Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester, and the Open University, Milton Keynes. Initially, that 1976 questionnaire was distributed through the organisation Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, ZTFE.² This resulted in a 'snowball' effect, with people who had not been sent a questionnaire by ZTFE asking to take part in the survey. The administration of the 1985 and 2003 surveys was structured in the same way, with the addition of using the World Zoroastrian Organisation, WZO,³ as well as ZTFE in 2003. The survey was conducted at the request of these Zoroastrian organisations in Europe to assess how the Zoroastrian community had changed or stayed the same in Europe, since the surveys of 1985 and 1976. It was an opportunity to unpack some of the issues that, with the wisdom of hindsight, seemed to have been overlooked or not phrased correctly in the previous surveys, and to

develop some of the ideas generated from the earlier surveys (Mehta 1981a, 1981b, 1993; Hinnells 2005).

In drawing up the 1985 survey questionnaire Hinnells and I looked carefully at what had seemed to be important from the 1976 questionnaire and what needed amplifying and adding. The 2003 questionnaire was developed in a similar way from the 1985 questionnaire. Some questions were common to both the 2003 and 1985 surveys. Those about demography, networking, inter- and intra-community relations, identities and ethnic discrimination were similar, except that more detail was asked about identity and inter-community relations. Both surveys included questions about membership of Zoroastrian organisations, religious authority in Europe and dangers to the Zoroastrian community in Europe. In 2003, new religious questions were asked and, of these, the most important were those relating to the purity laws.

Some of my earlier work, using the 1976 and the 1985 survey data, focused on the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism, exploring questions about who can be a Zoroastrian, relations with non-Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians' access to Zoroastrian religious buildings and ceremonies, for example. Symbolic boundaries can be considered, in one way, as external purity laws, but it was clear from the research that the data did not show the whole picture (Mehta 1981a, 1993). I knew from my own personal experience of Zoroastrian concern with cleanliness: the Zoroastrian concern with the disposal of bodily wastes; the rules governing women and menstruation; aversion to smoking; the disposal of dead bodies – in other words, the purity laws. The information from the 1976 and 1985 surveys did not cover these aspects of the purity laws.

In the 1985 survey, women's responses to questions about religious practices, beliefs and to the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism were, on the whole, more affirmative than men's were. The exceptions were in attitudes to accepting mixed, i.e. Zoroastrian/non-Zoroastrian, marriages and accepting the children of mixed marriages as Zoroastrians: here there was little difference between the attitudes of men and women. Hinnells notes that the pattern that emerges is of women being more active and more conventional in religious practice and belief than men, and that 'markers of ethnicity' are prevalent among women rather than the men (Hinnells 2005). He also says that both 'Zoroastrian men and women are equal in Zoroastrian belief and practice'. However, he suggests that the purity laws affect the position of women and that, since women have the key role in adding members to the Zoroastrian faith by birth, the purity laws to be observed by women '... are a consequence of this special status' (Hinnells 2005: 720).

The 2003 survey

Before the 2003 questionnaire was sent out to the Zoroastrian community in Europe, a very thorough pre-test was conducted using members of the

community of different ages, gender and countries of origin. The issues raised by these people were considered, and appropriate changes were made to the format and to the questions in the 2003 questionnaire. Two thousand questionnaires were sent out under the auspices of the WZO and ZTFE,⁴ mainly to addresses in the UK. Zoroastrians who did not receive a copy of the questionnaire contacted me and requested that one, or sometimes several, be sent to them. Again, as in the previous surveys, there was a 'snow-ball' effect in terms of the distribution of the 2003 questionnaire. The total number of Zoroastrians living in Europe is not known. However, in the 2001 census of the UK, 3,794 people said that their religion was Zoroastrian. The address list held by ZTFE suggests that there are about 200 Zoroastrians in mainland Europe and Ireland. Thus, the recorded population is approximately 4,000 people, although the actual population total in Europe will be greater than this.

A total of 298 women and 293 men responded, representing about 30 per cent of the questionnaires sent and about 15 per cent of the recorded population. A 30 per cent response rate to a non-targeted survey is considered excellent, and this data bank gives a much more representative sample than one could ever hope for with larger communities such as Christians and Muslims. The responses allow detailed analysis of the development of attitudes of Zoroastrians in Europe over the 27 years since the first survey in 1976.

Analysis of the new questions in the 2003 survey found that those relating to the purity laws yielded the most exciting results. The purity laws are an aspect of Zoroastrianism which is traditionally considered to be a private matter for Zoroastrians. The place of the purity laws in Zoroastrian practices and current attitudes towards them have not previously been publicised to outsiders, who are not given insight into their importance. In this chapter, I shall note the importance of the purity laws to the community and discuss the attitudes of Zoroastrian women to them, as expressed in the responses to these new questions in the 2003 survey. Tables 11.1 to 11.3 showing the response data are assembled in the Appendix at the end of the chapter.

The questions on the purity laws in the 2003 survey were as follows:

- 1 In your opinion, should Zoroastrian women in Europe avoid the following during menstruation?

		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
a	Prayer		
b	Prayer room		
c	Contact with priest		
d	Attending Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies		
e	Attending Jashans		
f	Other, please specify		

- 2 In your opinion should Zoroastrian women in Europe observe the purity laws associated with childbirth? Yes No
- 3 In your opinion, are there other purity laws that should be observed by Zoroastrians, either men or/and women, in Europe? Please specify

The questions 1f and 3 were open questions, asking for the respondent's own ideas about aspects of the purity laws. It should be noted that in the 2003 questionnaire the questions about the purity laws asked how they should be observed, not how the individual respondent, in practice, observed them. In further surveys, dealing with European Zoroastrians and the purity laws it would be beneficial for the research to ask questions about the respondent's own practices.

The earlier surveys, 1976 and 1985, found that Zoroastrians do not respond to questions that they consider too controversial or too personal or those which deal with matters of which they have little knowledge. Thus, some respondents answered neither 'yes' nor 'no' to questions 1a–1e and 2: it is called 'no response'. In some of the analyses, the 'no response' rate is important and will be included. The 'no response' can be counted when the respondent has answered one of the questions in the relationship being tested but not the other. For example, some of the respondents did not answer questions about membership of the Zoroastrian associations ZTFE and WZO but they answered questions about the purity laws. For these 'no responses' to membership of these associations their attitudes to the purity laws can be analysed (Tables 11.3j–p, on pp. 234–5).

It is from the results of the analyses of the 1976 and 1985 surveys that 'expected' and 'unexpected' bench markers will be applied. One of the important results from the 1976 and 1985 surveys indicated that women who were born in Europe, or came as young children, were less likely to support religious beliefs and practices than women who were born and grew up outside Europe or who came to Europe as adults. People living with their nuclear families only more commonly expressed stronger support for the religious beliefs and practices than did those living with extended families. The country or area of origin in which the respondent lived before coming to Europe was an important factor. More people coming from India, Pakistan and Africa supported the religious beliefs and practices than did people from the rest of the world. In addition, the type of environment in which respondents had lived before coming to Europe was an important factor: fewer people from the metropolitan cities supported religious beliefs and practices than those who had come from an urban or rural environment. Age was also an important factor in determining attitudes to the religious beliefs and practices: more of the older respondents supported the religious beliefs and practices. Attainment on educational and occupational scales was also a factor: the higher the attainment, the less there was support for religious beliefs and

practices. The type of education, whether scientific or liberal arts, or a combination or any other, such as law or accountancy, was significant with regard to the respondents' attitudes to religious beliefs and practices: fewer scientifically educated respondents affirmed them. Lastly, fewer Zoroastrians who were married to non-Zoroastrians affirmed the religious beliefs and practices compared with those who had Zoroastrian marital partners.

Summary of the responses to the question about purity laws

When considered as a whole, both men and women responded to the direct questions 1a–1e about the purity laws. The 'no response' rates were low for these questions, on average only 7 per cent. However, the 'no response' rates were high for the open-ended questions, being 81 per cent for question 1f, on 'other' purity laws for menstruating women, and 62 per cent for question 3, on 'other' purity laws for men and women.

The majority, over 50 per cent, of both men and women affirm that women should continue to pray during menstruation. [during menstruation], although the majority also believe that these women should avoid Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies, the prayer room, Jashans and the priest. In addition, the majority affirmed that Zoroastrian women should not observe the purity laws associated with childbirth. The questions 1f and 3 gave the respondents the chance to list other actions that they thought should to be taken by menstruating Zoroastrian women, in Europe: typical responses were that they should avoid marriage and initiation ceremonies, refrain from wearing their religious garments and from touching any Zoroastrian religious object. The few responses which dealt with men and purity laws suggested that men should take care to wash and say certain prayers after using the lavatory and after sex.

The data shows that the respondents consider that some of the purity laws are more important than others, as evidenced by a higher 'yes' response rate (more respondents affirmed them) than others (Table 11.1, on p. 228). The list below gives the purity laws in order of number of 'yes' responses.

<i>Number</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
1d	Avoiding the Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies	(1)	55
1b	Avoiding the prayer room	(2)	54
1e	Avoiding Jashans	(3)	51
1c	Avoiding the priest	(4)	49
2	Observing rituals after childbirth	(5)	33
1a	Avoiding prayer	(6)	32

Generally, this order remains unchanged from (1) to (6) when dealing with the total group of both women and men. When the order of importance

changes it is between Avoiding the Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies (1) and Avoiding the prayer room (2), or between Avoiding Jashans (3) and Avoiding the priest (4), or between Avoiding prayer (5) and Observing rituals after childbirth (6). Occasionally Avoiding the priest (4) can move into second place or rarely into first place, and sometimes Observing rituals after childbirth (6) into fourth place. The percentages are close to being average for ranks 1–4, and for ranks 5–6. Within the sub-groups, percentage variations may be wider: sometimes the small number of respondents in the group mean the figures have to be viewed with caution. Where this does not seem to be the case, I highlight it and discuss possible reasons for deviation from the norm.

The pattern of the ‘no’ to the purity laws was the inverse of the above: that is avoidance of prayer (6) has the highest ‘no’ followed by observation of childbirth rituals (5), priest (4), Jashans (3), prayer room (2) and Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies (1). Where the pattern deviates, it is usually between (6) and (5), between (4) and (3), or between (2) and (1). Thus, overall, there is a pattern to the order of affirmation/rejection of the listed purity laws that is found throughout the research data, whether the data is inter-group or intra-group, or sub-groups. Where it deviates from this pattern, which occurs in the sub-groups, it will be noted. In addition, in the charts where the percentages for affirmation and rejection of a purity law do not add up to 100 per cent it is because of the ‘no responses’ to that particular purity law or to the variable that is being measured against the law.

More women than men affirmed that women should avoid the prayer room, the priest, Jashans and ceremonies for the dead during menstruation and that they should observe the childbirth rituals. In addition, women were less likely to answer the question ‘Other purity laws to be observed by both men and women’. Twenty-two per cent of the women, responded to the question about ‘Other purity laws for menstruating women’ (12 per cent ‘yes’ and 10 per cent ‘no’) and 32 per cent responded to the question about ‘Other purity laws for both men and women’ (10 per cent ‘yes’ and 22 per cent ‘no’). The majority of those who affirmed ‘yes’ to the former, gave reasons that restated the five aspects of the purity laws as defined in questions 1a–1e from the questionnaire. However, the women who responded ‘no’ gave different reasons such as: ‘It is normal to menstruate’, ‘Women have the right to express their spirituality’, ‘Never believed in this discrimination. Outrageous. Women and men equal in Zoroastrianism’.

The responses to the question about ‘Other purity laws for both men and women’ had replies such as: ‘Bath before ceremonies, bath after funeral’, ‘No lust, no greed, cleanliness of body, mind and soul’, ‘Men or women bleeding from orifices or anywhere’.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the responses of women only to the six questions dealing with specific named purity laws (1a–1e and 2 listed above) and not on the two questions that dealt with ‘Other purity laws’, where there was a high ‘no response’ rate. Once men are taken out of the

data the women rank the purity laws differently with regard to the ordering of avoiding prayer (6) and observing the rituals after childbirth (5). These are reversed for the women, as can be seen in Table 11.3a (on p. 230) where the totals for the whole group of women are given at the top just below the headings.

In order to give an overall picture of how the women responded to the questions on these purity laws, the respondents who affirmed 'yes' to all six questions (group a) were compared with those women who wrote 'no' (group b) to all six questions. In the former group (a), there were 64 respondents, 21 per cent of the total number of women in the data set (Table 11.2, on p. 228). The outstanding feature of this demographic profile is of women, the majority of whom, 51 per cent, are over the age of 60 years, with 28 per cent who came from Africa and 11 per cent from Europe. Those 69 women who replied 'no' (b) to the six questions on the purity laws comprised 23 per cent of the total number of women in the survey (Table 11.2). Although there is a similarity numerically between these groups of women, 64 'yes' and 69 'no', there are marked differences in their demographic profiles as is demonstrated in the two tables. One-third of the group that wrote 'no' (b) were born in Europe compared with one-tenth of the group who wrote 'yes' (a) and in addition, 23 (33 per cent) of those who wrote 'no', had come to Europe as small children. The 'no' group (b) has a much younger age profile than the 'yes' group (a). Of the respondents who had ever been married 32 per cent of the 'no' group (b) had married out, compared with 11 per cent in the 'yes' group (a). In terms of education, the 'no' group (b) had a higher percentage of postgraduates, who had studied in Europe. Scientific education was higher in the 'no' group (b) than in the 'yes' group (a), 20 per cent compared with 9 per cent. Similarly, the 'no' group (b) had a higher percentage of professional and business people than the 'yes' group (a). This was also reflected in the occupations of respondents' parents, with the 'no' group (b) having higher percentages of professional fathers and mothers than the 'yes' group (a). In both groups the respondents from the metropolitan cities had the higher percentages 48 per cent 'yes' and 41 per cent 'no' as can be seen in Table 11.2, (on p. 228). From the 1985 research data it was expected that the women from the metropolitan cities would have a lower percentage of affirmation of the purity laws than those from the urban or rural areas. There was little difference in percentage terms between the family types of the two groups in attitudes to the purity laws. The data from 1985 suggest that the members of the nuclear families would support the purity laws at a higher percentage level than the members of extended families.

This is the general pattern, in terms of the demographic attributes of the respondents, that is followed to a greater or lesser extent in the analysis of the individual questions, namely questions 1a–1e and 2 on the purity laws, looking at who affirmed 'yes' or 'no' to each individual question, as opposed to who affirmed 'yes' or 'no' to all the questions.

Further analyses

The intra-group, as opposed to inter-group, responses to the purity laws were analysed. In the inter-group analyses, the data was analysed by looking at the men and women as a whole group (Table 11.1, on p. 228), and by looking at the women as two whole groups (Table 11.2, on p. 228), and their responses to the questions about the purity laws were compared. The two groups of women were compared further by looking at their demographic attributes, as shown in Table 11.2. In the intra-group analysis, responses of women were compared under sub-groups such as age, as shown in Table 11.3a (on p. 230–1).

Age and affirmation/rejection of the purity laws

Table 11.3a (on p. 230–1) shows that the age group 60–69 had the highest percentage of ‘yes’ responses to all the questions, whereas the under-30 group had the lowest percentage of ‘yes’ responses to all the questions. Conversely the under-30s had the highest percentage of ‘no’ responses to all the questions. It is interesting that the under-30 group puts avoidance of Jashans at the top of their list, with avoidance of the Favardigan/Mukhtad ceremonies placed third. Of the under-30s group 91 per cent was born in or came to Europe as young children. Overall, the ranking for the other age groups follows the ranking, except for the inversion of prayer and childbirth rituals, where the percentage differences are small.

It was expected, from the 1976 and 1985 research, that the older the person is, the more inclined they would be to follow the purity laws. However, in 2003 the 30–39 age group has a high percentage of ‘yes’ responses for all the purity laws, following closely on the 60–69 and 70+ age groups, whereas the 50–59 and 40–49 age groups closely follow the under-30 year group in having the highest percentage of ‘no’ responses. Eleven (45 per cent) of the women in the 30–39 age group, were born in Europe. This also, is an unexpected result because the 1976 and 1985 data suggests that birth in Europe was associated with less support for the religious beliefs and practices. Eleven women in the age group 30–39 affirmed all of the purity laws. Three women were born in Europe. All of these 3 women had parents and extended family in Europe. One had married out, 1 was married to a Zoroastrian and 1 was single. They had high educational levels, undergraduate or postgraduate. One was a professional, 1 was in business and 1 was in a white-collar occupation. Their fathers were either professional or businessmen and 1 of their mothers had a professional occupation. For the remainder of the 8 women who affirmed all of the purity laws 3 were born in India, 1 in Africa and 4 did not answer. Most had parents or extended family in Europe. All were married, of whom 2 had married out, 1 to a Hindu and 1 to a Christian. Seven had high educational levels of undergraduate (3) or postgraduate (4). Two women had had a scientific education. Five had professional, 4 had business occupations

and 5 of their fathers had business or professional occupations but only one mother had an occupation outside the home. When the women born in Europe are considered alone it was found that they all had parents and some had children and/or extended family in Europe. Four were single and 7 were married. Three had married out of whom 1 was a Christian and 2 had no religious affiliation. Six had pursued postgraduate study, 3 undergraduate and 2 further education levels. Only 2 had a scientific education. Eight of the fathers were in professional or business occupations as were 5 of the mothers. Two were homemakers.

Of the group of 30 women of the age group 30–39 years who affirmed at least one of the purity laws 37 per cent (11) were born in Europe, 20 per cent (6) were born in India and 43 per cent (13) do not state their place of birth. However, 5 of the 13 women stated that they had lived in Africa and a further 6 stated that they had lived in India. The highest number per decade, 23 per cent (7) came in the 1970s, so they came to Europe as children with most of these (4) coming from Africa. Unfortunately, the data is not clear about the place of origins of parents of the respondents. Thus, it is not known if a high proportion of these 30 women had some sort of connection with Africa: Zoroastrians from Africa typically support the key purity laws listed above. Nine of the 30 women came in the 1990s and 2000s; they came to Europe as adults. The data shows that the majority of these women have not changed their religious beliefs since coming to Europe. Nine (33 per cent) were single and, of those who were married, 5 were married to non-Zoroastrians. Nineteen (63 per cent) of them came from extended families. Further education was the highest level for 7 of the women: 8 had reached undergraduate level and 15 had reached postgraduate level. Seven of the 30 had had a scientific education. Eight had professional, 9 had business, 7 white-collar, 3 blue-collar occupations, and 3 were homemakers. Half of their fathers, 15, were in professional occupations but only 3 of the mothers were. Thirteen of the mothers were homemakers.

Thus, some of those women in the 30–39 age group who affirmed at least one of the purity laws either came to Europe as adults from India or may as young children have had some connection with Zoroastrians from Africa. Of the women who were born in Europe, all had their parents living in Europe and some had children or extended family in Europe. Eleven were from nuclear families and, as has been noted in the research data from the 1985 survey, it was found that the nuclear families affirmed the religious beliefs and values more than the extended families.

Marital status and affirmation/rejection of the purity laws

There is a difference between the single and married women in their attitudes to the purity laws. Most (70 per cent) of single women support avoiding the prayer room during menstruation, avoidance of the priest (65 per cent), and

avoidance of Jashans (65 per cent), compared with 61 per cent, 56 per cent and 59 per cent of the married women (Table 11.3b, on p. 231). Also, 40 per cent of the married women support avoiding prayer during menstruation compared with 28 per cent for the single women. Single women who affirm the purity laws rank them thus: avoiding the prayer room, Jashans, the priest, Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies, observation of childbirth rituals and avoiding prayer during menstruation. However, the married women who support the purity laws keep the rankings, except for reversing avoidance of prayer during menstruation with observance of childbirth rituals.

Marital partner and affirmation|rejection of the purity laws

Both types of married respondents, those with Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian partners, affirm or reject the purity laws in the order of their ranking (Table 11.3c, on p. 231). However, those with non-Zoroastrian partners affirm at a lower percentage level, 47 to 23 per cent, from those with Zoroastrian partners. The research data from 1976 and 1985 suggest that people who have married out of the community affirm less support for the religious beliefs and practices than those who have married Zoroastrians. Women who have married out of the community are regarded by some members of the community as no longer being Zoroastrian and they can experience hostility from these people. In spite of this, some of these women continue to support the purity laws. Twenty-seven women who had married non-Zoroastrians supported at least one of the purity laws, a third of these women had partners who had religious affiliations to non-Christian religions, mainly religions from India, and one-fifth had partners who had no religious affiliation. More than half were born in India and nearly a quarter were born in Europe. Of the former, with the exception of 1 woman, all came to Europe before 1980 and they all came in adulthood. Two-thirds stated that their religious beliefs had not changed since coming to Europe and three-quarters had attended religious classes as a child. Of the 7 women who had married out but who supported all the purity laws, 6 were born in the sub-continent and 1 was born in Europe. Once again, coming to Europe as an adult rather than in childhood seems to be a dominant factor in determining attitudes to the purity laws.

Type of family and affirmation|rejection of the purity laws

The types of family, whether nuclear or extended, have on average 7 percentage points difference between them on the measured attitudes to the purity laws, with nuclear families showing the higher support. The largest difference is attitudes to avoiding the priest with 12 per cent (Table 11.3d, on p. 231). The members of nuclear families rank avoidance of the priest equal second with avoiding the prayer room. Both types of family reverse avoidance of

prayer with observing childbirth rituals. The differences between the types of family are what would be expected from the 1985 research, with members of nuclear families affirming the purity laws at a higher percentage level than the members of extended families.

***Country of residence before Europe and affirmation/rejection of
the purity laws***

Table 11.3e (on p. 231) shows that more women, in percentage terms, who came from Iran rejected the purity laws than the women from India, Pakistan and Africa. Although only 8 in number, they are consistent in rejecting the purity laws. The respondents from Africa and Pakistan gave the highest percentage support for all the purity laws followed closely by those from India. There is some slight variation in the rankings for people from India, Pakistan and Africa. Indian and Pakistani respondents rank avoidance of the priest higher than avoidance of Jashans, and Indian respondents reverse avoidance of prayer with observation of childbirth rituals. African respondents rank avoidance of the prayer room higher than avoidance of Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies. The women who were born in Europe have, after those born in Iran, the lowest overall percentages of support, except support for avoiding Jashans (62 per cent) which they rank as highest, as has already been noted in the section on age, 30–39 year olds, and the purity laws. When the responses of the 28 women who were born in Europe, and who support at least one of the purity laws, are analysed for demographic characteristics it is found that the majority (75 per cent) come from extended families, half are single and, of those who are married, a third are married to non-Zoroastrians. Eighteen (64 per cent) are either homemakers, or in blue-collar or white-collar occupations. It would be interesting to know how many of these women were in part-time or full-time work, which does not match their educational level. Only 4 are in professional occupations even though 21 (75 per cent) had undergraduate or postgraduate education and 7 had further or secondary education as their highest level of education.

***Metropolitan or urban/rural environment and affirmation/rejection
of the purity laws***

The respondents who came from an urban or rural environment have a higher percentage of ‘yes’ responses for all purity laws except for avoiding the priest and prayer, whereas the women who were from a metropolitan environment affirm at 66 per cent and 57 per cent respectively, compared with 62 per cent and 41 per cent for the urban/rural women (Table 11.3f, on p. 232). In terms of ranking, the metropolitan environment respondents put avoiding the priest higher than avoiding Jashans. The respondents from the urban or rural environment rank avoidance of prayer above observing the childbirth rituals.

Although the affirmation of the respondents from metropolitan environment is lower than the respondents from urban/rural environment on four of the purity laws, avoidance of Favardigan/Mukhtad ceremonies, the prayer room, Jashans and prayer, the average difference is 6 per cent. For the two purity laws where the support is higher from the metropolitan respondents, for avoidance of the priest and observation of the childbirth rituals, it is higher by an average of 12 per cent. The research data from the 1985 survey suggested that fewer people from a metropolitan environment support religious beliefs and practices than people from an urban or rural environment. Clearly, this is happening with the attitudes of the metropolitan respondents to four of the purity laws in 2003 but not to others, namely, avoiding, during menstruation, the Favardigan/Mukhtad ceremonies, the prayer room, Jashans and prayer, but not avoiding the priest and observing the childbirth rituals.

Education level and affirmation/rejection of the purity laws

In the 1976 and 1985 surveys, fewer respondents supported the religious beliefs and practices as they ascended educational levels. In 2003, the attitudes follow a similar pattern but there are variations: fewer women whose highest level of education was secondary school supported the purity laws than the women with further education, except in observation of childbirth rituals, 51 per cent, compared with 35 per cent, and avoidance of prayer, 49 per cent, compared with 38 per cent (Table 11.3g, on p. 232). Fifty per cent (21) of the women with only secondary education are over 70 years old, and only 3 are under 40 years of age. Seventeen (40 per cent) came from Africa, 13 from India and 3 from Iran, with only 7 who were born in Europe. The majority (34) of the women with only secondary education have extended families in Europe. Only 7 of these women have married out and these are to Christians or to men with no religious affiliation. The pattern of ranking the purity laws deviates for all the educational levels, reversing avoidance of prayer with observing childbirth rituals. The respondents with postgraduate and undergraduate levels reverse avoidance of Favardigan/Mukhtad ceremonies with avoidance of the prayer room but few percentages points are involved. The attitudes of the respondents with only secondary level education to the purity laws goes against the 1976 and 1985 research data, on both counts of age and place of origin being associated with patterns of belief and practice.

Type of education and affirmation/rejection of the purity laws

Overall, fewer respondents who have had a scientific education support the purity laws, and the respondents who had both liberal arts and scientific education have the highest percentage support (Table 11.3h, on p. 233). The respondents with other types of education, such as accountancy or law, show

as much support for avoidance of the priest as the avoidance of the Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies (62 per cent). More respondents with a scientific education supported avoiding the prayer room (57 per cent) than avoidance of Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies (53 per cent). They also reversed avoidance of prayer and observation of childbirth rituals. The lower percentage support for the purity laws by respondents with a scientific education is in line with what would be expected from the 1985 research data.

Occupation and affirmation/rejection of the purity laws

If the women who had occupations from blue-collar to professional levels are compared, those in the blue-collar occupations had a lower level of support for the purity laws than would be expected; it is lower than those in white-collar occupations (Table 11.3i, on p. 233). Ten of the women in blue-collar occupations were aged 40–59 with only 3 under 20 years. Five of them had undergraduate or postgraduate education with only 3 with less than further education. Five came from Africa, 7 from the subcontinent and 3 were born in Europe. More respondents with blue-collar occupations support avoidance of the prayer room (67 per cent) than for avoidance of the Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies (61 per cent), and in addition, 56 per cent of them support avoiding prayer, which is higher than support for avoidance of Jashans (50 per cent). More respondents with business occupations supported avoiding of the prayer room (62 per cent) than for avoidance of the Favardigan/Muktad ceremonies (54 per cent). The respondents in all occupations except for business people reversed avoidance of prayer with observation of the childbirth rituals. Fewer women with professional occupations affirm the purity laws, which would be expected from the 1985 research. Respondents who were homemakers put avoidance of the priest highest at 64 per cent and reversed avoidance of prayer (39 per cent) with observation of the childbirth rituals (36 per cent). Retired respondents just put avoidance of the priest (72 per cent) and of Jashans (70 per cent) before avoidance of the prayer room, 69 per cent with a difference of 1–2 per cent. Retired women also reversed avoidance of prayer and observation of the childbirth rituals.

Membership of Zoroastrian organisations and affirmation/rejection of the purity laws

In comparing the membership of WZO and ZTFE it can be seen that members of ZTFE, with 73 to 43 per cent for the range of affirmation for all the purity laws (Table 11.3k, on p. 234) has a higher percentage of support than members of WZO with 64 per cent to 34 per cent (Table 11.3j, on p. 234). The respondents who are not members of ZTFE have the lowest affirmation of the purity laws, 35 per cent to 12 per cent, for the range of affirmation for all the purity laws (Table 11.3k). The ‘no response’ to membership of WZO

(Table 11.3j) has the highest percentage affirmation of all the purity laws, ranging from 75 to 40 per cent, even higher than membership of ZTFE (Table 11.3k). The differences between the membership of the two organisations and percentage affirmation of the purity laws are in the order of 10 per cent with the members ZTFE having the highest percentage affirmation.

However, the relationships between membership, non-membership and 'no response' to membership of WZO and ZTFE and the attitudes of the respondents to the purity laws are complex. When the respondent's attitudes to the purity laws and their membership of only one organisation, or of both organisations, or of neither organisation, or of 'no response' to the two questions about membership of WZO and ZTFE were analysed the complex relationships were simplified.

The majority of the women, 30 in number, who were only members of WZO, rejected all the purity laws from 67 to 50 per cent for the range of all the purity laws (Table 11.3l, on p. 234). They changed the rankings both for the rejection and for the affirmation of the purity laws. Fifteen of the women came from India, 3 from Pakistan, 2 from Africa, 2 from Iran and 6 were born in Europe. The majority came to Europe before 1980. In 2003, 24 of these women lived in or near London. The largest age group was 50–59 years of age with 10 women. Eleven, over 33 per cent, were married to non-Zoroastrians. Three had had a scientific education and 13 had had undergraduate education or higher. Overall, of the women under 60 years of age, their occupations reflected their highest education levels with 11 women in professional or business and 13 women with undergraduate or postgraduate levels of education.

As shown in Table 11.3m (on p. 235), 111 women were members of ZTFE only. They affirmed the purity laws from 76 to 47 per cent, the range of percentage affirmation of all the purity laws. These women came from India (52 per cent), Pakistan (3 per cent), Africa (24 per cent), Iran (1 per cent), and 15 per cent were born in Europe. Sixty-eight per cent came to Europe in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Twenty-four per cent were in the age group 60–69 years, 21 per cent in the age group 30–39 years and 20 per cent in the age group 50–59 years. Only 10 (9 per cent) of these women did not live in the south-east corner of England. Twenty-one per cent were single and of those who have been married only 18 per cent were married to non-Zoroastrians. Seventeen per cent were in nuclear families. Eleven per cent had had a scientific education and 51 per cent had had undergraduate education or higher. Of the women who were under 60 years of age, there are fewer women (18 per cent) in professional occupations than would be expected from their highest educational levels: 32 per cent had postgraduate level education.

Ninety-eight women were members of both WZO and ZTFE (Table 11.3n, on p. 235). The percentage range of affirmation ran from 70 to 39 per cent.

These women came to Europe from India (52 per cent), Pakistan (7 per cent), Africa (19 per cent), Iran (4 per cent), and 11 per cent were born in Europe. Twelve women (12 per cent) did not live in the south-east corner of England. Eighty-seven per cent were married and of these 88 per cent were married to Zoroastrians. Only 15 per cent were from nuclear families. Twenty-two per cent had had a scientific education and 56 per cent had pursued undergraduate or postgraduate education. This is reflected in their occupations, with 35 per cent of the women under 60 years of age having professional occupations.

Forty women were not members of either WZO or ZTFE. As a group, the majority of the women rejected the purity laws (Table 11.3o, on p. 235). The percentage range of rejection for all the purity laws ran from 77 per cent to 52 per cent. Nineteen of these women came to Europe from India, 1 from Pakistan, 5 from Africa, and 12 were born in Europe. Seventeen (42 per cent) women lived away from the south-east corner of England. Thirty were married, of whom 9 were married to non-Zoroastrians. Only 17 per cent were from nuclear families. 61 per cent (16) of women under the age of 60 years had had undergraduate education or higher but only 15 per cent (4) were in professional occupations.

In some ways, the last two analyses of members of both WZO and ZTFE, Table 11.3n (on p. 235), and membership of neither WZO nor ZTFE, Table 11.3o, are a mirror image of each other, with the majority of members of both organisations affirming all the purity laws and the majority of non-members rejecting all the purity laws. In terms of demographic attributes, more women were married out in percentage terms in the non-membership group than in the membership group, and for the non-membership group their occupations did not match their educational levels. In addition, more women in the non-membership group lived away from the south-east corner of England than in the membership group. The two organisations WZO and ZTFE have their European headquarters in London.

The analysis of the 17 women who did not respond to either question on membership of WZO or ZTFE (Table 11.3p, on p. 235) shows that the majority affirmed the purity laws and the percentage range of affirmation ran from 65 to 18 per cent. These women came from India (5), Africa (4), and Europe (6), with 1 woman from Iran, and 1 respondent gave 'no response' to the question of place of origin. They came to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s (6), and after 1980 (4). In 2003, 8 of them lived in London and 9 (53 per cent) lived away from the south-east corner of England. The age group 30–39 years comprises 29 per cent and is the highest in numerical terms, 5 women. Fourteen were married of whom 4 are married to non-Zoroastrians. Seventy-one per cent (12) of them came from extended families; no one was from a nuclear family. The educational levels of the under-60 year group range from primary to postgraduate and matched their occupations.

In the analysis of membership only of WZO or membership only of

ZTFE or 'no response' to either membership, it was found that the majority of members only of WZO (Table 11.3l, on p. 234) rejected the purity laws whereas the majority of members only of ZTFE affirmed the purity laws (Table 11.3m, on p. 237). The 'no response' women fell somewhere in between these two extremes. It is interesting that, in the demographic analysis of these three groups the age group 30–39 years appears again in the membership of ZTFE only group and the 'no response' group.

The differences between the membership of the two organisations, WZO and ZTFE, and the percentage affirmation of the purity laws were in the order of 10 per cent, with the members of ZTFE having the highest percentage affirmation. However, it was shown that membership, non-membership and 'no response' to membership of WZO and ZTFE and the attitudes of the respondents to the purity laws was complex.

Conclusion

The high response rate to the questions about the purity laws from the 2003 survey of Zoroastrians in Europe demonstrates the importance of these laws to Zoroastrians in Europe. The pattern of affirmation/rejection of certain purity laws shows that some laws are followed by more people than others. The pattern of affirmation generally goes from the highest to the lowest in the order of: avoidance of the Favardigan/Mukhtad ceremonies, the prayer room, Jashans, the priest, and observing the childbirth rituals to avoiding prayer. The rejection pattern is always the opposite of this list. Within the sub-groups of Zoroastrians there are interesting differences from this pattern, both in its ordering and in the strength of the percentage of 'yes' or 'no' responses. For the women observing the childbirth rituals frequently comes last in their ordering of the purity laws, and their percentage strength of 'yes' responses is much higher than for that of the men.

The women who affirm all the purity laws follow a general pattern of being older, coming to Europe as adults, and coming from Pakistan, Africa, and India. As a group, they are not as highly educated or nor do they have as high-status occupations as the women who reject the purity laws. The women who rejected all the purity laws have younger age profile than the affirmative group. A third of them were born in Europe and a third had come to Europe as young children. A much higher percentage of the rejecting group was or had been married to non-Zoroastrians than for the affirming group. The rejecting group had a higher percentage of postgraduates who had studied in Europe and they had a much higher percentage of scientifically educated women than the affirming group. In addition, the rejecting group had a much higher percentage of professional parents than the affirming group.

The affirmation or rejection of the purity laws was as expected from the data from the 2003 survey of Zoroastrians in Europe. However, there some interesting anomalies, such as the age group 30 to 39 years. A high proportion

of this age group were born in Europe and are second generation European Zoroastrians: they affirm the purity laws in a way that suggests they are maintaining their religion in the manner of their parents. The Iranian Zoroastrians' responses are important because they are consistent with each other and the majority tend to reject all the purity laws. They are only eight in number and these results should be viewed with caution. The attitudes of the respondents from metropolitan or urban/rural environments to the purity laws was not as clear-cut in 2003 as it was in 1985. For some of the purity laws the women from the metropolitan cities gave more support than respondents from urban or rural environments, namely during menstruation avoiding the priest and observing the childbirth rituals. Some members of the community regard women who have married non-Zoroastrians as no longer Zoroastrian and try to exclude them from the Zoroastrian religion; in spite of this, some of these inter-married women continue to support the purity laws. Two-thirds of these women who support the purity laws are married to men either who have non-Zoroastrian religious traditions from India or who have no religious affiliation. In addition, the majority had come to Europe as adults and their religious beliefs and practices had not changed. Coming to Europe as an adult seems to be a dominant factor in determining support for the purity laws.

Levels of education and type of education follow the pattern that is expected from the 1985 data. However, women with only secondary schooling have a lower affirmation rate of the purity laws than would be expected from the 1976 and 1985 data, and the results go against this data on age and place of origin as well as level of education. Occupation and the purity laws follow the trend that would have been expected from the 1985 data except for the blue-collar occupations. When the educational levels of the blue-collar women are examined, it is found that a number of them have high educational levels. The membership of WZO shows a greater breadth of the spectrum of support and rejection of the purity laws than membership of ZTFE. It ranges from 64 per cent support to 55 per cent rejection whereas membership of ZTFE ranges from 73 per cent support to 35 per cent rejection. However, as was demonstrated, these are complex relationships.

These six purity laws of the Zoroastrian religion affect women more than they affect men and more women support them as the central value of the traditional Zoroastrian religion than Zoroastrian men do. This is a very important addition to the understanding of Zoroastrian women and their attitudes towards their religion in Europe.

Appendix: Tables showing response data

In the following table, the first row shows the responses of the total group to the purity laws. The subsequent rows show the responses of the sub-groups to the purity laws.

Table 11.1 Inter-group analysis of male and female responses on the purity laws

Type of group	N	'Yes' / 'No' to the purity laws					
		Favardigan/ Muktad Ceremonies	Prayer Room	Jashans	Priest	Child Birth Rituals	Prayer
Rank		1	2	3	4	5	6
Men and Women 603							
Total group	'Yes'	55%	54%	51%	49%	33%	32%
	'No'	38%	39%	42%	44%	59%	60%
men		47%	46%	42%	41%	31%	26%
	N=	293	138	134	123	120	91
women		64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
	N=	298	190	188	178	172	104
men		47%	48%	52%	52%	62%	67%
	N=	293	139	141	152	152	181
women		30%	31%	37%	37%	58%	54%
	N=	298	91	92	100	109	172

Table 11.2 Inter-group analysis of demographic characteristics of female respondents who answered 'Yes' or 'No' to all six purity law questions

Age	Under 30 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70+ years
N=64	3 5%	11 17%	8 12%	9 14%	17 27%	16 25%
Age	Under 30 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70+ years
N=69	10 15%	12 17%	12 17%	17 25%	6 9%	11 16%

Marital Status	N=64		Marital Partner	N=55
single	9	14%	Zoroastrian	48
married	55	86%	Non-Zoroastrian	7
Marital Status	N=69		Marital Partner	N=58
single	11	16%	Zoroastrian	37
married	58	84%	Non-Zoroastrian	20

ZOROASTRIANS IN EUROPE 1976 TO 2003

<i>Type of family</i>	<i>N=64</i>			<i>Metropolitan/Urban. Rural</i>	<i>N=64</i>	
nuclear	12	19%		metropolitan	31	48%
extended	44	69%		urban/rural	24	37%
<i>Type of family</i>	<i>N=69</i>			<i>Metropolitan/Urban/ Rural</i>	<i>N=69</i>	
nuclear	12	17%		metropolitan	28	41%
extended	51	74%		urban/rural	18	26%

<i>Country of Origin and Education</i>	<i>Place lived before Europe</i>		<i>Place of Primary Education</i>		<i>Place of Secondary Education</i>		<i>Place of Further Education</i>		<i>Place of Under- graduate</i>		<i>Place of Post- graduate</i>	
<i>N=64</i>												
India	32	50%	32	50%	35	55%	28	44%	14	22%	7	11%
Pakistan	4	6%	4	6%	4	6%	4	6%	3	5%	1	2%
Africa	18	28%	15	24%	13	23%	3	5%				
Iran	1	2%	1	2%								
Other	1	2%	1	2%								
Europe	8	12%	9	14%	12	19%	16	25%	10	16%	7	11%
<i>Country of Origin and Education</i>	<i>Place lived before Europe</i>		<i>Place of Primary Education</i>		<i>Place of Secondary Education</i>		<i>Place of Further Education</i>		<i>Place of Under- graduate</i>		<i>Place of Post- graduate</i>	
<i>N=69</i>												
India	31	45%	31	45%	31	45%	25	36%	21	30%	7	10%
Pakistan	2	3%	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%				
Africa	7	10%	8	11%	6	8%						
Iran	3	4%	2	3%	2	3%	1	1%	1	1%		
Other	4	6%	3	4%	2	3%	1	1%	1	1%	11	1%
Europe	22	32%	24	35%	25	36%	27	39%	19	27%	21	30%

<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>N=64</i>			<i>Type of Education</i>	<i>N=64</i>	
primary	0	0%		liberal arts	18	28%
secondary	12	19%		science	6	9%
further	22	34%		both	15	23%
undergraduate	15	23%		other	15	23%
postgraduate	15	23%				
<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>N=69</i>			<i>Type of Education</i>	<i>N=69</i>	
primary	1	1%		liberal arts	22	32%
secondary	5	7%		science	14	20%
further	18	26%		both	15	22%
undergraduate	15	22%		other	15	22%
postgraduate	30	43%				

<i>Occupation</i> <i>N=64</i>	<i>Respondent's</i> <i>Occupation</i>		<i>Father's</i> <i>Occupation</i>		<i>Mother's</i> <i>Occupation</i>	
homemaker/farmer/forces	6	9%	3	5%	39	61%
retired	20	31%				
blue-collar	5	8%	8	12%	1	2%
white-collar	16	25%	18	28%	7	11%
business	9	14%	13	20%	7	11%
professional	8	12%	16	25%	1	2%
<i>Occupation</i> <i>N=69</i>	<i>Respondent's</i> <i>Occupation</i>		<i>Father's</i> <i>Occupation</i>		<i>Mother's</i> <i>Occupation</i>	
homemaker/farmer/forces	8	12%	2	3%	35	51%
retired	8	12%				
blue-collar	4	6%	3	4%	1	1%
white-collar	16	23%	12	17%	11	16%
business	12	17%	18	26%	14	20%
professional	21	30%	33	48%	6	9%

In the following charts, the first row shows the responses of the total group to the purity laws. The subsequent rows show the responses of the sub-groups to the purity laws.

Table 11.3 Intra-group analyses of responses on the purity laws

<i>Type of group</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>'Yes' / 'No' to the purity laws</i>					
			<i>Favardigan/ Muktad Ceremonies</i>	<i>Prayer Room</i>	<i>Jashans</i>	<i>Priest</i>	<i>Child Birth Rituals</i>	<i>Prayer</i>
<i>Rank</i>			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
a. Age in year groups		298						
Total group			'Yes'					
			'No'					
70+			64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
N=			31%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
60-69			64%	62%	62%	61%	42%	41%
N=		56	36	35	35	34	23	23
50-59			80%	72%	70%	71%	41%	43%
N=		76	61	55	53	54	31	32
40-49			60%	61%	55%	50%	27%	38%
N=		56	33	34	31	28	15	21
30-39			59%	59%	48%	54%	27%	29%
N=		44	26	26	21	24	11	13
20-29			61%	64%	61%	57%	34%	39%
N=		44	27	28	27	25	15	17
10-19			38%	48%	52%	35%	33%	24%
N=		21	8	10	11	7	6	5
70+			27%	27%	27%	30%	50%	41%
N=		56	15	15	15	17	28	23

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60–69		14%	21%	22%	22%	47%	49%
N=	76	11	16	17	17	36	37
50–59		36%	36%	39%	45%	68%	57%
N=	56	20	20	22	25	38	32
40–49		34%	32%	43%	39%	64%	61%
N=	44	15	14	19	17	28	27
30–39		36%	34%	36%	41%	61%	57%
N=	44	16	15	16	18	27	25
9–29		62%	52%	48%	67%	67%	76%
N=	21	13	11	10	14	14	16
b. Marital status		298					
Total group	‘Yes’	64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
	‘No’	30%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
single		63%	70%	65%	65%	35%	28%
N=	54	34	38	35	35	19	15
married		64%	61%	59%	56%	35%	40%
N=	244	156	150	143	137	85	97
single		35%	26%	31%	33%	61%	68%
N=	54	19	14	17	18	33	37
married		29%	32%	34%	37%	57%	51%
N=	244	72	78	83	91	139	124
c. Marital partner		244					
Total group	‘Yes’	64%	61%	59%	56%	35%	40%
	‘No’	29%	32%	34%	37%	57%	51%
Zoroastrian		68%	66%	63%	60%	37%	44%
N=	190	130	125	119	114	71	83
non Zoroastrian		47%	45%	43%	41%	25%	23%
N=	51	24	23	22	21	13	12
Zoroastrian		25%	27%	29%	33%	55%	47%
N=	190	47	52	56	63	104	89
non Zoroastrian		47%	49%	51%	53%	65%	67%
N=	51	24	25	62	27	33	34
d. Type of family		260					
Total group	‘Yes’	64%	64%	59%	54%	38%	34%
	‘No’	32%	31%	35%	38%	56%	59%
nuclear		69%	67%	65%	67%	40%	42%
N=	48	33	32	31	32	19	20
extended		63%	63%	58%	55%	32%	37%
N=	212	133	133	123	117	69	78
nuclear		31%	33%	35%	33%	60%	58%
N=	48	15	16	17	16	29	28
extended		32%	31%	35%	39%	59%	56%
N=	212	68	66	75	83	125	118
e. Country before Europe		298					
Total group	‘Yes’	64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
	‘No’	30%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
India		70%	65%	62%	64%	40%	42%
N=	149	104	97	92	95	59	62
Pakistan		79%	79%	64%	71%	50%	43%
N=	14	11	11	9	10	7	6

Table 11.3 Continued

Type of group		N	'Yes' / 'No' to the purity laws				
			Favardigan/ Muktad Ceremonies	Prayer Room	Jashans	Priest	Child Birth Rituals
Rank			1	2	3	4	5
	Africa		79%	80%	75%	65%	49%
	N=	57	45	45	42	37	28
	Iran		25%	37%	37%	37%	12%
	N=	8	2	3	3	3	1
	Other		56%	56%	56%	44%	11%
	N=	9	5	5	5	4	1
	Europe		36%	43%	62%	36%	25%
	N=	61	22	26	38	22	15
	India		25%	30%	31%	32%	61%
	N=	149	38	45	47	48	91
	Pakistan		14%	14%	29%	21%	50%
	N=	14	2	2	4	3	7
	Africa		17%	16%	21%	32%	46%
	N=	57	10	9	12	18	26
	Iran		75%	62%	62%	62%	75%
	N=	8	6	5	5	5	6
	Other		44%	44%	44%	56%	89%
	N=	9	4	4	4	5	8
	Europe		51%	44%	46%	49%	58%
	N=	61	31	27	28	30	34
f. Metropolitan/ urban or rural		223					
Total group			'Yes'	71%	69%	65%	65%
			'No'	26%	27%	31%	33%
	metropolitan			70%	66%	61%	66%
	N=	139		97	92	91	92
	urban/ rural			74%	74%	70%	62%
	N=	84		62	62	59	52
	metropolitan			26%	29%	33%	31%
	N=	139		36	41	46	43
	urban/ rural			25%	24%	27%	36%
	N=	84		21	20	23	30
g. Education Level		298					
Total group			'Yes'	64%	63%	60%	58%
			'No'	30%	31%	34%	37%
	secondary or less			69%	64%	64%	59%
	N=	42		29	27	27	25
	further			71%	67%	64%	66%
	N=	97		69	65	66	64
	undergraduate			64%	67%	59%	51%
	N=	61		39	41	36	31
	postgraduate			55%	57%	53%	54%
	N=	97		53	55	51	52

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Secondary or less	21%	24%	24%	31%	43%	33%
N= 42	9	10	10	13	18	14
further	27%	30%	30%	32%	57%	55%
N= 97	26	29	29	31	55	53
undergraduate	34%	31%	39%	44%	59%	59%
N= 61	21	19	24	27	36	36
postgraduate	36%	35%	38%	39%	65%	60%
N= 97	35	34	37	38	63	58
h. Type of education 298						
Total group 'Yes'	64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
'No'	36%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
liberal arts	64%	61%	59%	56%	34%	34%
N= 93	60	57	55	52	32	32
scientific	53%	57%	51%	45%	20%	35%
N= 51	27	29	26	23	10	18
both	66%	68%	62%	62%	34%	38%
N= 73	48	50	45	45	25	28
other	62%	59%	59%	62%	41%	34%
N= 56	35	33	33	35	23	19
liberal arts	30%	33%	34%	38%	59%	58%
N= 93	28	31	32	35	55	54
scientific	35%	33%	37%	43%	69%	55%
N= 51	18	17	19	22	35	28
both	33%	29%	34%	37%	59%	58%
N= 73	24	21	25	27	43	42
other	32%	34%	36%	34%	54%	54%
N= 56	18	19	20	19	30	30
i. Occupation 298						
Total group 'Yes'	64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
'No'	30%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
homemaker	61%	61%	58%	64%	36%	39%
N= 33	20	20	19	21	12	13
retired	80%	69%	70%	72%	51%	41%
N= 71	57	49	50	51	36	29
blue collar	61%	67%	56%	50%	33%	56%
N= 18	11	12	10	9	6	10
white collar	69%	69%	63%	59%	34%	41%
N= 68	47	47	43	40	23	28
business	54%	62%	50%	50%	33%	33%
N= 48	26	30	27	24	16	16
professional	52%	50%	48%	46%	20%	29%
N= 56	29	28	27	26	11	16
homemaker	33%	33%	36%	30%	61%	51%
N= 33	11	11	12	10	20	17
retired	15%	22%	21%	22%	42%	46%
N= 71	11	16	15	16	30	33
blue collar	28%	28%	39%	50%	56%	39%
N= 18	5	5	7	9	10	7
white collar	29%	29%	34%	38%	60%	54%
N= 68	20	20	23	26	41	37
business	35%	29%	33%	40%	56%	56%
N= 48	17	14	16	10	27	27

Table 11.3 Continued

Type of group	N	'Yes' / 'No' to the purity laws					
		Favardigan/ Muktad Ceremonies	Prayer Room	Jashans	Priest	Child Birth Rituals	Prayer
Rank		1	2	3	4	5	6
professional		43%	45%	46%	48%	75%	66%
N=	56	24	25	26	27	42	37
j. Member WZO	298						
Total group 'Yes'		64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
'No'		30%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
member of WZO		64%	63%	58%	59%	34%	34%
N=	128	32	81	75	76	44	43
not member of WZO		55%	55%	51%	48%	32%	33%
N=	98	54	54	56	47	31	32
no response to membership of WZO		75%	74%	74%	68%	40%	51%
N=	72	54	53	53	49	29	37
member of WZO		32%	34%	38%	37%	59%	59%
N=	128	41	43	47	47	67	75
not member of WZO		38%	36%	41%	45%	61%	59%
N=	98	37	35	40	44	60	58
no response to membership of WZO		18%	19%	18%	25%	50%	39%
N=	72	13	14	13	18	36	28
k. Member ZTFE	298						
Total group 'Yes'		64%	63%	60%	58%	35%	38%
'No'		30%	31%	34%	37%	58%	54%
member of ZTFE		73%	73%	69%	67%	43%	43%
N=	209	152	152	145	140	91	90
not member of ZTFE		35%	29%	29%	27%	12%	23%
N=	48	17	14	14	13	6	11
no response to membership of ZTFE		51%	54%	46%	46%	17%	27%
N=	41	21	22	19	19	7	11
member of ZTFE		24%	23%	26%	30%	52%	51%
N=	209	50	49	54	63	109	107
not member of ZTFE		54%	58%	60%	62%	75%	67%
N=	48	26	28	29	30	36	32
no response to membership of ZTFE		37%	37%	41%	39%	66%	54%
N=	41	15	15	17	16	27	22
l. Member of WZO only	30						
		43%	43%	37%	43%	17%	17%
	30	13	13	11	13	5	5
		50%	50%	57%	47%	67%	67%
	30	15	15	17	14	20	20

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m. Member of ZTFE only							
	111	75%	76%	73%	69%	47%	47%
	111	83	84	81	77	52	52
		22%	19%	22%	27%	48%	47%
	111	24	21	24	30	53	52
n. Member of WZO & ZTFE							
	98	70%	68%	65%	64%	40%	39%
	98	69	68	64	63	39	38
		26%	29%	31%	34%	57%	56%
	98	26	28	30	33	56	55
o. Not member of either WZO or ZTFE							
	40	35%	27%	27%	25%	10%	22%
	40	14	11	11	10	4	9
		52%	57%	60%	62%	77%	65%
	40	21	23	24	25	37	26
p. No response to membership WZO & ZTFE							
	17	59%	65%	59%	47%	18%	41%
	17	10	11	10	8	3	7
		23%	23%	23%	35%	65%	41%
	17	4	4	4	6	11	7

Notes

- 1 Although other writers such as Mary Boyce have discussed the purity laws in their work on Zoroastrians and the Zoroastrian religion in Europe, their work is not based on a broad survey of the community in Europe today. J. R. Hinnells has not discussed the purity laws with reference to Zoroastrians in Europe.
- 2 ZTFE: Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.
- 3 WZO: World Zoroastrian Organisation.
- 4 I wish to acknowledge the generosity of WZO and ZTFE in their funding of the 2003 survey of Zoroastrians in Europe. Without their financial help as well as their other assistance, the 2003 survey could not have been conducted.

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PARA-ZOROASTRIANISMS

Memetic transmission and appropriations

Michael Stausberg

Unlike the other chapters of this volume, this chapter moves beyond the frames of established Zoroastrianism(s). The texts that will be considered here were not written or composed by people born into any ethnic Zoroastrian community, nor were the groups/movements that will be outlined here started by persons born into Zoroastrian communities. Accordingly, they are not generally recognized as legitimate offshoots of institutional Zoroastrianism by established Zoroastrian organizations. Nevertheless, in one way or the other, they raise a claim of ‘Zoroastrianness’, and unlike Zoroastrian institutions in charge of religious boundary-maintenance the History of Religions is in no position to simply deny such claims. Quite the contrary, this chapter proceeds from the assumption that the history of religious ‘memes’ (representations, ideas, names, artifacts, etc.) beyond the communities that may be claiming to legitimately ‘own’ them is a significant (albeit generally neglected) subject area for the non-confessional study of religions (which is itself part of that process of memetic extensions). The present volume provides a good context for delineating this sort of a study since the phenomena described here (in seven sketches) can be fuzzily characterized as ‘memetic migrations’, if not ‘diasporas’.

Following Martin Baumann’s definition, a situation or a group can be classified as ‘diasporic’ in so far as it is characterized by maintaining an identificatory reference to a (real or imaginary) distant geography territory (‘homeland’) and the cultural-religious traditions emanating from it (Baumann 2003: 68). Thus, migration as such does not classify as a diasporic process, but it can be the starting point for the formation of diasporic identities. In both cases, it is people who are moving – some developing diasporic discourses and identities, others not. In the cases that this chapter will examine, however, it is ‘memes’ which are moving – not ‘genes’ or people.

Evidently, religions are based on the communities professing, practicing, and promoting them, but as memetic structures religions at the same time transcend the genetic cohorts propagating them (‘propagation’ is here understood

in the horticultural sense of the controlled perpetuation of plants, aiming at an increase in numbers by preserving essential characteristics of the plant in question). When using the term ‘memetic’, I do not wish to subscribe to a memetic theory of cultural evolution and religion (see Dawkins 2006a), but I find the term, originally coined by biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 (= 2006b), useful for referring to a broad range of cultural phenomena which are replicated in the process of transmission. A ‘meme’ is a ‘replicator’ of cultural information open to mimesis (imitation/variation). ‘Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches’ (Dawkins 2006b: 192). Successful memes are characterized by longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity, but at the same time ‘meme transmission is subject to continuous mutation, and also to blending’ (Dawkins 2006b: 195).

While a religious group can deny membership to persons it regards as not qualified or an institution can deny access to a building under its administration, religious memes easily spread across the boundaries of the communities that claim possession of them, unless they are strictly kept secret or their transmission is restricted by other means such as professional codes. The influence executed by one religion on another is an example of a cross-boundary spreading of religious memes. Some religious memes spread broadly and speedily, in an almost ‘epidemic’ manner (see Sperber 1996), and enrich other meme pools while other memes perish or remain bound to their original meme pools and the gene pool of a given group.

The spread of memes easily exceeds conscious control mechanisms. Memes (as I use the term) are as much conscious as unconscious phenomena. While the physically unbounded spread of memes is the more general case of memetic replication, in religious history there are conscious and even institutionalized attempts at memetic transmission, for instance in the form of mission and proselytizing. On the other hand, the study of missions abounds with examples for (conscious as well as unconscious) mutations of the memes in the process of their eventual adaptation.

This chapter discusses the migration and transmission of memes and their reception, appropriation, elaboration, and transformation by people outside the given established communities of ethnic Zoroastrians, i.e. those ethnic-religious groups (such as the Parsis) sharing (a) a common name, (b) accounts of a common ancestry constructing the group as kinship-community or ‘super-family’, (c) memories of a shared history and origin, (d) elements of common culture including dialect and customs, (e) an anchorage in a specific territory, and (f) a sense of solidarity as for example provided by charitable institutions (criteria adapted from Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 6–7).

This chapter will sketch seven cases of memetic transmission and elaboration beyond the reach of these ethnic communities. One may refer to this process (for which we still lack a proper scholarly term or vocabulary) as the formation of para-traditions, with the prefix *para-*, as suggested by the

Oxford English Dictionary (<http://dictionary.oed.com>), to be understood in the sense of ‘analogous or parallel to, but separate from or going beyond’. These memetic reconfigurations are nominally analogous to, but separate from and beyond the ones advanced by the ‘traditional traditions’. As we will see, para-traditions can claim that the ‘traditional traditions’ are truly secondary in the sense of uncommitted to the original – while the ‘traditional traditions’ find the opposite to be true. This raises the issues of authenticity and legitimacy.

The sort of religious identities constructed with the replication and elaboration of these memes beyond the confines of the established ethnic communities are not diasporic in the sense of referring to any ‘original homeland’. At least in some of the cases that will be sketched in this chapter, the process of memetic appropriation may build on a notion of ‘origin’, and their claim for ‘origin-ality’ may stem from this identificatory reference to a distant tradition emanating from a mythical center or point of origin. For several of the cases under consideration here, this point of origin is the name Zoroaster.

The seven sketches outlined in this chapter will be presented in chronological order.¹ While the account starts in antiquity, most of the cases considered here belong to the globalized world of the twentieth century, and their geographical extension stretches from California through Germany and Sweden to Russia. In some cases, the memic transmission and subsequent reconfigurations occurred without members of the ethnic communities being involved; in other cases we will find extensive overlapping and feedback on the ethnic communities.

Sketch 1: Western Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha

With the spread of the Achaemenid Empire, Zoroastrians migrated from the Iranian mainland westwards to Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor. Those who settled there probably lived in small communities continuing, as far as possible, Iranian ways for life, including religious practice.² Zoroastrian priests accompanied the Achaemenid armies and may well have settled in order to serve their lay clienteles. The presence of Iranians and their religious specialists (with their extended fields of competencies) seems to have paved the way for the spread of Zoroastrian/Iranian memes beyond the communities of settlers. This process, it seems, was speeded up once Greek came to be used as a common language in the Hellenistic age, and it was at this time that a wider circulation of Zoroastrian memes is attested (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 370–1), making an impact on the changing religious landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean. While these memes included complex ideas which in a reconfigured manner found a home in different meme pools, other memes included names only, most prominently the names Mithra(s) and Zoroaster. Both cases imply a radical detachment from the structure of the original meme pool: while the Iranian/Zoroastrian deity Mithra evolved into an

eponymous god (Mithras) of a cult subsequently spreading in areas where no Zoroastrians would ever settle, the name (= memetic unit) Zoroaster was used as a projection screen of ascribed authorship to a range of texts on topics including magic, astrology, and mineralogy (Beck 1991; Stausberg in press). While there are traces of Iranian antecedents for some of these texts, other ascriptions were apparently freely invented. It is unclear what composers and readers alike actually connected to that name, i.e. what they 'knew' about Zoroaster. Be that as it may, the process of putting texts or fragments under the putative authority of Zoroaster continued and partly intensified down the ages. Most lines of ascriptions eventually dried out, others continued, some misattributions were added, and the reliability of some further ascriptions, namely Gnostic texts, were critically disputed once those treatises came in the midst of diverging religious truth-claims (Stausberg in press).

More than a millennium later, Georgios Gemistos 'Plethon' (ca. 1355/60–1452), a Byzantine Neo-Platonic philosopher, made Zoroaster the author of a collection of the so-called *Chaldean Oracles*. These revelatory-philosophical fragments were quoted by a number of Platonists and Christians from around the fourth century CE onwards. Out of these materials, Plethon compiled a textual corpus consisting of 60 hexameters to which he referred as the *Magical Logia of Zoroaster's Magi*. Hence, Zoroastrian authorship was imprinted on this newly established corpus, which Plethon went on to elucidate in a brief exposition and a longer commentary. In the latter he drew a line from Zoroaster, whom he (following Plutarch) held to have lived 5,000 years before the Trojan Wars, to Plato and ultimately to himself – the renovator of this line of 'Hellenic' wisdom. In a way, the 'Zoroastrian' *Magical Logia* are constructed as a new Sacred Scripture (duly elucidated in commentaries) and in Plethon's program of spiritual and political innovation Zoroaster takes the place of Moses as the ultimate point of reference (Tambrun 2005; see also Stausberg 2001). Accordingly, he composed a sort of confession of faith in twelve articles entitled *Condensation of the Teachings of Zoroaster and Plato* which clearly moved beyond the frame of Christianity (Stausberg 1998a, I: 77–80). Plethon's attempt to rejuvenate the Byzantine Empire from its stasis took the posture of a rehabilitation of the chain of memory and wisdom springing from its remote fountainhead Zoroaster. Hence, Plethon's vision can be described as a Neo-Zoroastrian/Hellenic project. While this program was buried in the ruins of the Byzantine Empire, Plethon's Neo-Zoroastrian sacred scripture was effectively transmitted to Italy and all over Western Europe where many intellectuals throughout the subsequent centuries believed themselves to be quoting Zoroaster when citing from one of the numerous (and subsequently considerably enlarged) editions of the *Chaldean Oracles* (Stausberg 1998a).

The authenticity of the ascription of the *Oracles* to Zoroaster was increasingly challenged by scholars from the seventeenth century. The growing and

spreading knowledge of Zoroastrian scriptures in the West since the eighteenth century, however, did not prevent authors from inventing their own imaginary Zoroastrian writings (see e.g. Stausberg 1998a, II; Stausberg 1998b). The most influential of these modern pseudepigrapha is Friedrich Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883–5). While Nietzsche, who once had been a professor of classical philology, must have had some knowledge about ancient Iranian religious history (see Aiken 2003; Rose 2000: 175–81), his choice of the name Zarathustra for the name of his philosophical protagonist remains somewhat obscure (Birus 2006). Even if some resounding 'genuine' Zoroastrian themes (= memes) may be detected by the expert (Rose 2000: 181–2), in this 'book for all and no one' Nietzsche's references to Iran and Zoroastrianism are downplayed by the poet (Birus 2006: 44). Nietzsche himself identified with his protagonist, 'his son' (27/4/1883), to a varying degree, first warning the readers against naively identifying the opinions of his Zarathustra with his own views, then, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), announcing a future Zarathustra, a 'younger, stronger, and godless one', before finally, in *Ecce homo* (1889), claiming a complete psychological identification between himself and his literary creation (Birus 2006: 44).

In terms of ideology, however, in the very same writing (= *Ecce homo*), Nietzsche argues that he picked the name Zarathustra precisely because the historical 'singularity' of 'that Persian' was exactly the opposite of his own intentions: it was Zarathustra who according to Nietzsche had first regarded the struggle between good and evil as the main principle of history and had thereby provided a metaphysical foundation for morals. Since Zarathustra had first invented this ominous error and given that Zarathustra was 'the most truthful and courageous thinker of all', Nietzsche claimed that he should also be the first to realize this error. 'Zarathustra' therefore stands for the self-conquest of morals into its very opposite – the naming reflecting 'the transformation of the first moralist into the first immoralist' (Nietzsche 1980: 367). This is the program of a deliberate memetic appropriation that by affirming an apparent legacy at the same time transforms its alleged historical antecedent and namesake. Accordingly, the three main teachings of Nietzsche's Zarathustra – namely (1) the *Übermensch*, (2) the will to power, and (3) the eternal recurrence (see Figal 2006) – do not aim at any mimetic/memetic resemblance to historical and institutional Zoroastrianism, and Nietzsche himself would be the first to stress these differences. This deliberate mimetic/memetic mutation gives shape to a new birth of Zarathustra who would in turn, *as Zarathustra*, make a long-lasting impact on twentieth-century religious history, and the very name Zarathustra is for a general audience indissolubly tied to Nietzsche.

The global public Nietzschean memetic appropriation of the name Zarathustra poses a challenge for Zoroastrians. While it provides them with an opportunity to state their case, Nietzsche and his Zarathustra do not

match the way Zoroastrians regard their 'prophet' and his message. In spring 2006, a struggle for legitimate public representation and ownership of the name/meme Zarathustra erupted in Australia, where Dame Elizabeth Murdoch, the patron of the McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, situated 40 km south of Melbourne (www.mcclellandgallery.com), had commissioned a 4-m high bronze male nude figure with reputed Australian sculptor Peter Schipperheyn. The sculpture bearing the title 'Zarathustra' was unveiled by Dame Elizabeth on April 1. On his homepage (www.users.bigpond.com/SCHIP/zarathu.htm; accessed on July 18, 2006), the artist explains that when selecting a title for the massive sculpture 'the sheer poetry of this beautiful sounding name totally obsessed me, in my heart a mystique was enveloping the sculpture I was to make.' Schipperheyn furthermore explains about his studies, starting with rereading Nietzsche's book, but extending to other materials, and the more he learned, 'the more excited I became, to learn of an individual who lived so long ago whose teachings have been tightly woven into subsequent spiritual traditions including my own' (= Christianity). The idea of a Zoroastrian impact on Christianity obviously made the name Zarathustra ever the more appealing to the artist who, however, as he explained to me by email (July 20, 2006) wished to create 'a larger than life figure of an archetypical man in bronze' representing 'both the Ancient Persian and the Modern German, whose spirits I feel I intuitively know', and 'man as a fundamental paradox'. Schipperheyn's sculpture thereby fuses representations of the Persian Zarathustra, Nietzsche's transformation of him, and the more underlying dilemmas of the human condition into a genuinely new artistic creation.

However, when word spread about the sculpture and its imminent unveiling, Melbourne Zoroastrians started a controversy which speedily spread all over the world. Schipperheyn was invited to speak to the Zoroastrian community in Sidney (where his work was perceived as highly offensive), an event which Schipperheyn perceived 'as being put before a religious court' (email of July 20, 2006). Zoroastrian internet-networks were mobilized globally in order to prevent their 'prophet' being presented as a gigantic nude in a sculpture park, and Schipperheyn reports having received over 500 emails and many phone calls, the fiercest criticism originating from Mumbai. (Obviously not all Zoroastrians objected and some even appreciate the artistic qualities of the work.) The events surrounding the Danish newspaper depictions of Muhammad fresh in mind, the internet-campaign by enraged Zoroastrians led to the Gallery perceiving the sculpture a security issue. As a result, the Gallery prevailed on the artist to change the name of the sculpture. It now carries the title 'Thus Spake Zarathustra', thereby clearly limiting the memetic appeal to the figure created by Nietzsche.³

Sketch 2: Mazdaznan

While Nietzsche's Zarathustra is a powerful textual invention, our subsequent sketches will deal with a series of religious movements that in one way or the other reinvent Zoroastrianism outside the ethnic boundaries of the genetically continuous established Zoroastrian communities. Mazdaznan (for which see Linse 2001; Stausberg 2002b: 378–400), the first movement to be considered here, was started and promoted by Otoman Hanish (d. 1936) whom his admirers regarded as the 'Zarathustra redivivus'. In some varieties of his name this claim is spelled out by inserting the middle name Zar-Adusht, that besides creating an association with Zoroaster was meant to contain the word Zar ('prince'), referring to Hanish's alleged noble birth. While there are traces of a hagiography of 'the Master', as he was officially addressed, that would dislocate his spiritual authorization to a temple-order in Tibet – one cannot avoid thinking of Madame Blavatsky here – not much is known about his early biography in terms of empirically validated information before his foundation of the first Mazdaznan-organizations in Chicago and California in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. From North America the movement later spread to Europe. While it has survived the death of its 'Master' and to some extent blossomed in the decades after WW II, the movement seems to have lost its force since the 1970s (at the very latest) and is nowadays on a sharp decline.

As many, if not most, religious innovations, Mazdaznan draws on a wide range of influences and inspirations. Typically for many modern movements the impact of the Theosophical Society is noted throughout (see Linse 2001). Here, no general characteristic of the movement will be attempted, but the emphasis will be on its memetic reconfiguration of Zoroastrianism. That is not meant to obstruct the heterogeneous elements deriving from other sources that the movement built on.

For Zoroastrians and Zoroastrian scholars alike, the very name of the movement is recognizably adapted from Zoroastrian vocabulary. The name for the religion of the Mazda-worshippers (Pahlavi *dēn ī māzdešnān*) is here condensed into a single word. By adopting that name, Mazdaznan emphasizes its alleged 'Zend-Avestan' origins. Mazdaznan, however, understands that word to signify the 'master-thought' which is referring to an all-embracing teaching consisting of thought, word, and deed (see Stausberg 2002b: 379), another well-known Zoroastrian meme. Zoroastrian memes are transfigured in Mazdaznan mythology and practice.

As to practice, among other things such as breath and breathing, Mazdaznan emphasized songs and prayers, many of which were composed by Hanish, sometimes elaborating on Zoroastrian memes (names and motives). At the same time Mazdaznan attached great importance to the ancient 'Manthra(s)', even if recognizing that their original intention and purpose were no longer apparent. Nevertheless, the ancient Zoroastrian *manthras*, the

Yatha and the *Ashem*, were enjoying a primary position in Mazdaznan prayer books which even contained several free translations of the ancient Avestan *manthras* by Hanish himself. Both formulae were also set to music (see Stausberg 2002b: 385).

In many respects, Mazdaznan was a hygienic system based on assuming the original perfect condition and future perfectibility of the human body. The emphasis on the significance of the body for spiritual progress was perceived to be a heritage from Zoroaster's teaching (see Linse 2001: 282). Mazdaznan encouraged vegetarianism and prescribed a refined dietetics, resulting in the publication of a series of cookery books, suggestions for therapies, and the production and sale of dietetic substances and products.

The ultimate aim of the praxis is 'rebirth', understood here as a spiritualization of the body, leading to self-salvation. Apart from emphasizing ascetic self-discipline and prescribing several techniques, Mazdaznan developed a program of eugenics aiming at the betterment of the offspring through carefully controlling the circumstances of the very act of procreation and subsequent pre-natal 'education' of the fetus. Hanish's Mazdaznan championed an articulate racial ideology (see Linse 2001: 272–9; Stausberg 2002b: 387–9) according to which only the members of the 'highest', i.e. the Aryan, race are in a position to benefit from Mazdaznan's program and to develop to mankind's highest ultimate potentials. According to Mazdaznan, in its purest form the Aryan race is to be found where 'Zarathustra's spirit and his lofty aims in life' are realized in the best manner, where 'heart, blood and skin are purest', namely in Great Germania (Linse 2001: 278). Through proper 'race care', the white race and the 'Germanians' have to purify themselves and to get rid of 'impure blood', in order to be able to transform them into the seventh and ultimate race.⁴

Turning to mythology, according to Hanish the 'mother' and 'patron' of the white race is called Ainyahita, a clear transfiguration of the Zoroastrian goddess Anahita. Hanish creates a mythological account around Ainyahita whom he presents as a blue-eyed girl of ten, dressed in white, girdled with the *kosti* and regularly saying her *patets* (Hanish 1913; Stausberg 2002b: 379–81). This mythological universe, set in remote Tibet, is populated by various Zoroastrian divine beings and demons with whom Ainyahita converses extensively. Even the dialogues with Ahura Mazdah, however, are only preludes for her discovery of her divine self, the divinity in her heart. According to Mazdaznan, Ainyahita's 'pearls' (a Gnostic metaphor!) were later on assembled by Zarathustra, the 'great carrier of light' for the Aryans and progenitor of the Aryan race, who had lived around 6,900 years BCE and recreated the truly Aryan religion founded by Ainyahita. That religion was later on embodied by 'Jesus the Nazarene'. Accordingly, Hanish provides an 'Aryanized' biography of Jesus whose Zoroastrian-Ainyahitan teaching was sabotaged by Paul and his doctrines leading to a 'Judaization' of early Christianity.⁵ There were continuous traces of the true Aryan teach-

ings throughout European history and Mazdaznan sources report on occasional visits of *mobeds* from the East resulting in the formation of Freemasonry. However, it is with Mazdaznan only that the original Aryan religion is rejuvenated and rehabilitated in the West, and in that sense Mazdaznan professes to be the authentic original Zoroastrianism (Stausberg 2002b: 389–91).

The very name ‘Mazdaznan’ represents the movement’s claim to the Zoroastrian meme pool. While not claiming to represent historical Zoroastrianism, in mythology and praxis Mazdaznan raises an even greater claim, namely that of recovering and fulfilling a universal spiritual tradition shared by Zoroastrianism as well as other forms of ‘alternative’ religious history. Since Mazdaznan felt that it had a larger vision than historical Zoroastrianism, it made some efforts at proselytizing among the Parsis, whom Mazdaznan must have regarded as an ideal target group for its message. Indeed, looking at some trends in the mid-twentieth-century Parsi community, one finds several resounding motives including an emphasis on hygiene, race, gender equality, and, among some, an interest in vegetarianism and eugenics. Before WWII, Mazdaznan had a centre in Bombay, and the high-ranking Mazdaznan missionary Clarence Gasque alias Mother Superior Gloria was active among the Parsis, where she seems to have exerted some sort of influence without achieving any lasting success, and it seems that her initial popularity gave subsequently way to negative reactions.⁶ The Parsi priest Framroze Ardeshir Bode, high-priest (*Dastur*) at the newly founded Fasli temple in Bombay and highly controversial in view of his performing (jointly with another high-priest) the initiation of ethnically illegitimate candidates, actively stood up for the Mazdaznan group in Bombay⁷ and took part at a Mazdaznan world-congress in Zurich in 1950. Apart from India, some Parsis encountered Mazdaznan on their travels in North America (see Stausberg 2002b: 399). So also Dastur Dhalla who on the one hand defended the sincerity of Hanish and Mazdaznan against suspicions that they were merely masked Christians aiming at converting the Parsis to Christianity. On the other hand, however, Dhalla clearly pointed out that neither Hanish nor Mazdaznan had an authentic Zoroastrian background (Dhalla 1975: 719–21). Currently, there are some contacts between offshoots of the German Mazdaznan environment and Dame Meher Master-Moos, a well-known Parsi esotericist.

Sketch 3: Dastur Sraosha Kaul

California has been a particular fertile ground for religious innovation in the modern age. This is also true for our brief chronology of mimetic reconfigurations of Zoroastrianism. In 1917, The Reorganized Mazdaznan Temple Association of Associates of God was registered in California. The year before (for what follows: Stausberg 2002b: 361–2), in San Diego a civil engineer from a German background with the surname Kaul (born in Berlin in 1885) who ever since his youth had been interested in Zoroastrianism

had obtained the Zoroastrian ritual garments from a Parsi art dealer. Kaul adopted the Zoroastrian surname Sraosha (sometimes also spelled as Craosha) and even added the prestigious Zoroastrian priestly title *Dastur* to his name.

This unique Dastur started to propagate what he regarded as Zoroastrianism and reports claim he had ‘converted’ some 30 persons to his Zoroastrianism. It seems that he was most successful in recruiting people clinging to some sort of ‘Aryan’ ideology. Unfortunately, it is unclear what his Zoroastrianism amounted to, but as he did not hesitate to get in touch with the Bombay Parsi community asking for books about Zoroastrianism to be sent to him it seems that his vision of Zoroastrianism was from an ideological point of view more affine to established Zoroastrianism rather than a reinvention of his own (as was the case with Hanish). Later on, Kaul founded an American Zoroastrian Association in San Diego. It seems that this association held regularly meetings and had a library and two lecture halls. There were plans to establish a fire-temple. Unfortunately, I have lost track of what happened to Dastur Kaul and his movement around the time of the outbreak of World War II.

Sketch 4: The Mazdayasni Zarathushti Anjuman/ International Mazdayasnan Order

The next movement to be considered here started its activities likewise at the West Coast of the United States, in Washington State in the early 1960s, before moving its headquarters to Springfield, Oregon, where, between 1964 and 1969, it acted under the name The Mazdayasni Zarathushti Anjuman. This name was subsequently changed to The International Mazdayasnan Order (for this and the following see Stausberg 2002b: 362–4). Unlike in the case of Mazdaznan this choice of name is explicitly designed to create a linkage with established Zoroastrianism; unlike Mazdaznan and Dastur Kaul this movement was directly inspired by two Zoroastrian priests, namely Dastur Bode from India and Rashid Shahmardan, an Iranian priest who spent the better part of his life in India and had the reputation of being a mystic (*dervish*). Dastur Bode went regularly to their center in the US.

In contrast to Dastur Kaul and Mazdaznan who were appealing to Westerners, the recruitment basis for this movement mainly seems to consist of ethnic Iranians seeking to ‘return’ to Zoroastrianism. The political sympathies of the movement are clearly with the former Shah regime, and the political resistance towards the Islamic Republic seems to have lately seriously restrained its liberty of action in Europe. In the United States some years back the movement reported a membership of some 500. Not quite unexpectedly in view of its recruitment basis, the movement emphasizes the importance of the freedom of choice of religion. It emphasizes monotheism, egalitarianism, ecology, democracy, and rejects sacrifice, fasting, and

priesthood. With Mazdaznan it shares an optimistic outlook for the future and it likewise stresses the aim of individual moral-spiritual self-perfection. While the teaching of that movement with its 21 principles does not correspond to established mainstream Zoroastrianisms, its ideas are not far removed from reinterpretations of the religion as proposed by leading modern Zoroastrian intellectuals and in contrast with the cases outlined above it was inspired by two ‘ethnic’ Zoroastrian priests. In a figurative sense, its appeal may be classified as diasporic since it promises to offer to ethnic Iranians the option of returning to their perceived religious origins. In any case The International Mazdayasnan Order is a reconfiguration of Zoroastrianism crossing beyond the borders of the established Zoroastrian communities. The same is true for the next movement to be considered here.

Sketch 5: The Zarathushtrian Assembly

While The International Mazdayasnan Order seems to go largely unnoticed in Zoroastrian circles, this is not the case with The Zarathushtrian Assembly, an organization which was incorporated in California in 1990 (for what follows see Stausberg 2002b: 366–72; Hinnells 2005: 523–6). Although The Zarathushtrian Assembly has several prominent founding members (most of them ethnic Zoroastrians) and a good number of committed adherents, the organization is mainly inspired by the work and the personality of Ali Akbar Jafarey, one of the most controversial figures of modern Zoroastrian history (at least from a Parsi point of view). His very name is anathema for Parsis who perceive themselves as ‘orthodox’ or ‘traditional’ and who use every occasion they can to bring him into discredit. While there are conflicting accounts about Jafarey’s background and education – he was born in Kerman (Iran) – Jafarey spent many years of his youth in Karachi (Pakistan) where he came in contact with the local Parsi community.

Jafarey considers Dastur Manekji N. Dhalla (1875–1956), one of the leading progressive Parsi twentieth century priests and intellectuals of the twentieth century (see Stausberg 2002b: 108–11; Hinnells 2005: 212–16), among his teachers. Jafarey’s interpretation of Zoroastrianism which he started to unfold since the 1960s is indeed indebted to Dhalla’s scholarly work. Moving to Teheran, where a number of his books were published by Zoroastrian organizations, Jafarey became an influential figure in the growing and modernizing Zoroastrian community of the capital.

Following the revolution resulting in the formation of the Islamic Republic, Jafarey left Iran, as the new regime was not favorable to persons with links to the former government and who furthermore had prominently renounced Islam and were actively recruiting Muslims to Zoroastrianism. While Jafarey, who at the time of writing is in his late 80s, settled in California, he was likewise traveling extensively within North America, but also to Europe and Australia. Many of his students and admirers revere Jafarey as a guru, but his

religious program is less centered on his personality and charisma, but is rather built on apparently rational arguments. His reputation is not that of a revealer, but that of a scholar. This claim is underlined by the academic title Doctor, the validity of which is regularly cast in doubt by his Parsi adversaries.

Jafarey's reconstruction of Zoroastrianism focuses on the *Gathas* which by most modern scholars and Zoroastrians alike are generally ascribed to Zarathustra himself (see Stausberg in press). Jafarey goes so far as to take the *Gathas* as the only canon for Zoroastrianism. According to this view, all later Zoroastrian traditions are acceptable only in so far as they conform to the canonical authority provided by the *Gathas*. The crucial question then is the content of the *Gathas*. While contemporary philological scholarship still struggles with reaching even the most basic consensus of an interpretation of the *Gathas*, Dr Jafarey is able to extract a clear message from these five hymns of archaic poetry of some 278 stanzas (see Jafarey 1989). To begin with, Jafarey's Zarathushtrism is a pronounced monotheism denouncing any divine beings besides Ahura Mazda. Moreover, this *Gatha*-Zarathushtrism is the sum of everything that is deemed to be politically correct from the point of view of a modern, enlightened worldview: the *Gathas* promote a progressive, egalitarian (as to race, caste, nationality, and gender), altruistic, liberal, competent, conscientious, democratic, and ecological mentality. Morals turn into ethics: There are neither pre- nor proscriptions, but individual responsibility and freedom of choice. Jafarey's *Gathas* are stripped of links to conventional religion: mankind is its own savior, concepts of an individual's afterlife are largely absent, priesthood is rejected, and initiation is redefined as an act of confession of faith. The entire ritual apparatus of Zoroastrianism is abandoned or replaced by reconstructed rituals that are deemed to be in line with the *Gathas*.

This modernistic reconfiguration of the message of Zarathustra redefines adherence in terms of choice and commitment to a certain 'way of life' rather than membership in an ethnic community. That is why The Zarathushtrian Assembly does not regard itself as just another traditional Zoroastrian association, but as the prototypical Zoroastrian organization par excellence, since it claims to be the only one exclusively committed to following Zarathustra. The Zarathushtrian Assembly is a de-ethnicized memetic reorganization of Zoroastrianism.

While the established ethnic Zoroastrian communities struggle with reproducing their membership basis, memetic *Gatha*-Zarathushtrianism recruits adherents or sympathizers from other gene pools.⁸ According to Hinnells' sources, in London alone Jafarey's network 'accepts' some 100 members a year into Zarathushtrianism. The primary target- or interest-group are Iranians of a Muslim background, and by now a network of small-scale, mainly Persian-speaking, organizations have cropped up around the world that in one way or the other are linked to The Zarathushtrian Assembly and its aims. The interest-groups, however, seems to be extending to people from the former

Soviet Union and the Central Asian countries that have a profound Iranian cultural legacy. Moreover, it seems that the *Gatha-Zarathushtrian* movement is increasingly appealing to people which have no genetic affiliation to Iran. Occasionally some Europeans and Americans have declared their adherence to *Gatha-Zarathushtrianism*,⁹ and The Zarathushtrian Assembly seems to have found relatively fertile grounds in Venezuela and Brazil, which is a haven for many new religious movements and diverse forms of spiritual experimentation.

Sketch 6: Alexander Bard

As soon as new religious movements are able to attract celebrities, they obtain an increased degree of publicity, respectability, and media-attention. At least in Sweden, this is what happened to Zoroastrianism. The celebrity in question is a musician by the name of Alexander Bard (b. 1961). Bard became famous as a member of the Swedish pop band Army of Lovers which had several hits in the early 1990s. The band was controversial for their provocative, partly frivolous videos, and controversial for their cross-dressing and explicit lyrics. After the band split up, Bard pursued further projects as a musician and producer as well as writing books and working as a sort of a psychoanalyst. Bard is very much a celebrity and dazzling figure in Swedish public life.

According to his own account, after his childhood in a devout Christian environment and a brief interplay as a ‘Satanist priest’ in adolescence Bard got interested in and eventually ‘converted’ to Zoroastrianism while he was living in Amsterdam in 1983. (Bard adopted his forename Alexander in 1985, i.e. after his ‘conversion’, and from a traditional Zoroastrian perspective this is a very odd choice.) His initiation was performed by an Iranian Zoroastrian priest in Gothenburg in 1997. Whereas Bard does not publicly advertise Zoroastrianism and (unlike many Christian artists) refrains from making references to his religion in his music, he makes no secrets of his religious confession (which also features on his homepage)¹⁰ and thereby has, in Sweden at least, contributed to attracting a certain amount of public attention to Zoroastrianism.

Bard does not subscribe to Zoroastrianism in any of its established varieties. His peculiar vision of Zarathustra (see Stausberg 2002b: 330–1) is inspired by Dr Jafarey in regarding Zarathustra primarily as a philosopher who, according to Bard, already some 3,700 years ago proclaimed a modern existentialist philosophy emphasizing the necessity of freedom of choice. Moreover, in Bard’s view, Zarathustra had anticipated the revolutionary thoughts of twentieth-century natural sciences, in particular the Big Bang theory and quantum mechanics, the former (in Bard’s reinterpretation) necessitating the assumption of a Wise Spirit (= *Ahura Mazda*) setting the frame for the process and unfolding of the laws of nature (= *Asha*), and the latter requiring a non-deterministic worldview. As religions (in Bard’s view)

have to be judged according to their compatibility with modern science, Bard finds Zarathustra's philosophy to be the best choice. In line with his scientism, Bard rejects standard features of traditional religion (in the Judaic-Christian-Islamic prototype) including priesthood, divine anthropomorphism, moral prescriptions, prophecy, and eschatology. Hence, Bard takes some radical steps towards de-religionizing Zoroastrianism further than his mentor Dr Jafarey. Whereas The Zarathushtrian Assembly in its way celebrates a number of Zoroastrian festivals, these are more or less irrelevant to Alexander Bard. While Dr Jafarey and many members of The Zarathushtrian Assembly, despite emphasizing the universal character of Zarathustra's message, still cling to its Iranian legacy (for example by celebrating Iranian festivals), with Alexander Bard the ethnic background even of Zarathustra loses any importance whatsoever. For him, Iran is in no way privileged, and he regards the question of where Zarathustra had lived as completely immaterial. Likewise, he shows no interest in the fate of the established ethnic Zoroastrian communities and he has few contacts with the Swedish Zoroastrian association in Gothenburg.

Sketch 7: Pavel Globa and his Avestan Schools of Astrology

Kamran Jamshidi, the Swedish-Iranian priest who had formally initiated Alexander Bard into Zoroastrianism, is actively spreading the 'good religion' around the world.¹¹ Among others, Mobed Jamshidi has performed several initiation-ceremonies in Minsk (Belarus) and in Moscow (in 2001 and 2005 respectively).¹² It seems that none of the initiates had an ethnic Iranian background. As a matter of fact, Russia is currently witnessing an increasing interest in Zoroastrianism, mainly resulting from the efforts of Pavel Pavlovič Globa, a well-known astrologer born in 1953.¹³ Globa started his career as a public astrologer during the years of Perestroika. Because of his television shows and his famous clientele he can be regarded as a post-Soviet media celebrity (see also his homepage: www.globa.ru).

Globa claims distant Persian ancestry and reports that his grandfather, a physician, had started a small Zoroastrian group in early twentieth-century St Petersburg which was subsequently suppressed in the wake of the October Revolution. In a way, then, Globa claims to continue the work started by his grandfather before the Soviet era. Globa recounts that (somewhere in Eastern [mythical] territories) his grandfather had initiated him into the esoteric wisdom of 'Zervanite *mobeds*', i.e. priests upholding the cosmogonic primacy of the divinity Zurvan. Zurvanism is often regarded as a 'sect' of Zoroastrianism – and in Globa's view that seems to bolster its esoteric dimension. Globa believes that there are still pockets of Zurvanites living in Northwest Iran. While those who, like Globa himself, have a genetic as well as an initiatory affiliation to esoteric Zurvanism can claim to be 'Zervanites', his students are mere 'Zoroastrians'.

The important points of reference in Globa's memetic reconfiguration of Zoroastrianism are neither Zarathustra nor the *Gathas* and the supreme god Ahura Mazda but the Sasanian dynasty, the Pahlavi-books, in particular the *Bundahishn*, the time-god Zurvan and the other *yazata* connected to the calendar. Unlike Dr Jafarey and Alexander Bard who build their mimetic transformations of Zoroastrianism on their interpretation of Zarathustra and the *Gathas*, Globa wishes to reconstruct Sasanian Zoroastrianism which in part is a continuation of Mesopotamian astrological traditions. In this view, even the Zoroastrian priesthood of the *Magi*, despised by modernist reconstructions of Zoroastrianism, gains a positive quality as transmitters of ancient esoteric and astrological knowledge that was partly inherited from Chaldea. For Globa Zurvan is the sole absolute deity who conceived Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu as two subordinate Spirits. Zarathustra was a reformer restoring the pristine purity of Zurvanite religion. According to Globa, Zarathustra had lived between the river Volga and the Urals, locating the religion in Slavonic territories and linking Indo-Aryan and Slavonic religious genealogies. While Dr Jafarey and Alexander Bard are basically modernists, Pavel Globa is an esotericist and this shapes his Astro-Zoroastrianism.¹⁴

In several Russian cities, Globa has founded a number of so-called Avestan Schools of Astrology where his pupils teach and issue diplomas to their students. With respect to the dualism between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, Avestan astrology is held to be a powerful protection against the forces of evil. The Avestan 'system' of astrology as 'rediscovered' by Globa is apparently not much different from ordinary Western prognostic astrology, apart from some minor modifications. However, Globa has added some new planets, including *Arta* and *Aza*, creatures of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman respectively. The system also works with the distinction between *menog* and *getig*, as the transcendent and real worlds respectively, opening for different astrological contextualizations and leading to different astrological evaluations of otherwise identical constellations. According to Globa, the Avestan form of astrology is superior to other forms of astrology for it is grounded in a religious system rather than in a materialistic worldview. The religious grounding of Avestan astrology is provided by the elaborate Avestan/Zoroastrian calendar as devised and modified by Globa (and his closest collaborators). While the Avestan astrology assigns a *yazata* to each day and month (as in the traditional Zoroastrian calendars), it likewise assigns a good (= 'totem') and an evil (= 'antitotem') animal to each day, month, and year. As a system of katarchic astrology it provides practical guidance, including ethical and practical guidance (what to do and what not; what to eat, how to dress, etc.). Moreover, it has prognostic value. The yearly Zoroastrian calendars (in color and large formats) are among the main publications of Globa's groups. They are religious manifestos and a prognostic as well as ethical instrument for day-to-day behavior.

In 1994 a Zoroastrian Congregation was founded and registered in St Petersburg.¹⁵ This congregation has a hierarchical structure, with Globa acting as its head (Dean or '*mobad*').¹⁶ The Dean has selected some of his closest pupils to act as *horbads* who constitute a council. The *horbads* (including some ladies) were initiated by Globa. The *horbads* are in their turn authorized to initiate people into Zoroastrianism. The memetic adaptation of the historical Sasanian and post-Sasanian priestly nomenclature (*dastur*, *mobed*, *herbad*) underscores the positive evaluation of the Zoroastrian priestly traditions. While the candidates during initiation previously obtained tricolor cords – red/yellow/green, symbolizing good thoughts/words/deeds and representing the three colors of Zurvan – they later started using white cords which they obtained from the Parsis in India. The colorful Astro-Zoroastrian cord was replaced by 'real' Zoroastrian *kustis*. They also obtained a white priestly dress from the Parsis. In that way, the impact of the Parsis brought some aspect of Astro-Zoroastrianism closer in line with established Zoroastrianism. The Astro-Zoroastrian priests perform some special liturgies which, however, are very remote from any Zoroastrian models. The congregation arranges regular prayer-meetings where they partly employ Avestan texts and their Russian translations. Furthermore, it arranges festivals, some of which are adaptations from Iranian prototypes (including *Nowruz*, *Rapitvin*, the *Gahambar*, and *Mehragan*). In their rituals, the fire is of paramount importance – a clear memetic-ritualistic transfer. Sometimes, the congregation arranges special events such as conferences. Moreover, the congregation publishes a newsletter and a magazine (*Mitra*) promoting the Avesta, Avestan astrology, Zoroastrianism, and Zurvanism.

Religious innovation and the emergence of para-Zoroastrianisms

This chapter is a study of religious innovation as a result of the spread of what is here referred to as religious 'memes' beyond the boundaries that religious communities erect around themselves. The stimuli for religious innovation often arise from various forms of interactions with other religious traditions (as much as from internal competitions and negotiations); cross-fertilization of religious traditions is an important means of religious innovation. The seven cases sketched in this essay are different (and partly even contradictory) forms of elaborations and reconfigurations of Zoroastrian memes by persons who were not primarily socialized into (ethnic) Zoroastrianism.¹⁷ Whereas the first set of examples (§ 1) entailed the mere usage of the name (= memetic unit) Zoroaster/Zarathustra as the author or protagonist of reassembled or newly written textual materials without any apparent Zoroastrian genealogy of the textual materials in question, the remaining sketches have different degrees of relationships to established institutional Zoroastrian communities. While Dastur Kaul (§ 3) as an individual and

The International Mazdayasnan Order (= § 4) as a group regarded themselves as continuing the established Zoroastrian tradition (= a memetic complex), Mazdaznan (§ 2) cannot be categorized as a Zoroastrian movement; rather, Mazdaznan lays claim to a more encompassing legacy that also embraces historical Zoroastrianism (as one of its subsequent developments) and avails itself freely of various aspects of established Zoroastrianism. The Zarathushtrian Assembly (§ 5), in contrast, presents itself as the purified version of primordial Zarathushtrianism, deriving in unmediated fashion from Zarathustra and its words as laid down in the *Gathas*. While Mazdaznan emphasizes bodily behavior such as nutrition, breathing, singing, and sexuality, *Gatha-Zarathushtrianism* focuses on ethics, ideology, and in the case of Alexander Bard (§ 6) on the compatibility with natural sciences. Former pop-star Bard is as much a celebrity in Sweden as TV-astrologer Pavel Globa in Russia. In contrast to the modernist ideology of *Gatha-Zarathushtrianism*, Globa's esoteric Astro-Zurvanism (§ 7) builds on other aspects of the traditional Zoroastrian legacy.

The future developments of the para-Zoroastrianism sketched in this chapter remain to be seen. They may well turn out to be relatively short-lived experiments only to be replaced by others. The main thrust of this chapter was to exemplify the flow of memes or representations, the study of which may open new horizons for religious history.¹⁸

Notes

- 1 Other sketches could be added, not the least from the Muslim world, including astrology and mysticism, e.g. the Azar Keiwan-school (see Stausberg 2002a 413–17). Sarah Stewart drew my attention to the Zoroastrian memetic legacy of Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan.
- 2 No diasporic orientation of these communities is attested by the sources.
- 3 Peter Schipperheyn has generously commented on an earlier draft of this section. (Jesse Palsetia had reminded me of the incident in the first place.)
- 4 Mazdaznan race ideology is in many respects close to Nazi ideology, but there are also some distinct differences, and Mazdaznan did not benefit from the Nazi regime.
- 5 There were several early twentieth-century attempts at 'Aryanizing' Christian origins.
- 6 John Hinnells reminds me of an incident reported in the *Parsi Prakash* (vol. VIII): When the Government wanted to acquire and pull down the building housing the Mazdaznan-centre in summer 1944, Mazdaznan officials protested by referring to the religious status of the building. At that point some Parsi individuals and organizations intervened and challenged that claim, emphasizing the non-religious character of the place. (These Parsis obviously found it difficult to accept cooking classes as a 'religious' activity!)
- 7 On December 13, 1944 Dastur Bode put forward an appeal to the High Court for the recognition of the Mazdaznan-center as a center of worship (see the preceding note); the appeal was dismissed with costs and the building was pulled down (source: *Parsi Prakash*; information provided by Hinnells).

- 8 It needs to be emphasized that Jafarey has also many admirers and sympathizers among ethnic Zoroastrians the world over.
- 9 The 'Acceptance Ceremony' of a certain Stephen Williamson as performed by Jafarey is documented at <http://www.efn.org/~opal/stevezphotos.html> (accessed on July 18, 2006). Interestingly, the ritual was performed inside a Zoroastrian temple.
- 10 <http://www.alexanderbard.com/> (accessed on July 18, 2006).
- 11 Mobed Jamshidi is the grandson of a former Iranian high-priest (Ardeshir Azargoshasp) from Teheran with roots in Yazd.
- 12 Pictures of both events can be seen on <http://www.oshihan.org/IndexEnglish.htm> (accessed on July 18, 2006).
- 13 The following sketch is based on Tessmann 2005. This MA-thesis (supervised by the present author) is based on written source-materials, internet materials, and two shorter field trips to Minsk and St Petersburg. Mrs Tessmann (who has also kindly commented on an earlier draft of this section) is currently a PhD-student at Södertörn University College, Stockholm.
- 14 While Globa and some of his followers maintain that his astrology had been 'Zoroastrian' all along, the available sources suggest that Globa around 1989–90 started to place astrology in a 'Zoroastrian' light (Tessmann 2005: 62).
- 15 The registration was subsequently modified twice (in 1996 and 2000).
- 16 After Globa had moved away from Moscow, a 'junior dean' (or *zaotar*) was appointed acting as deputy dean.
- 17 In the contemporary world, the study of religion and Iranian philology contributes to spreading Zoroastrian memes. Reading about Zoroastrianism or reading Zoroastrian texts (edited and translated by philologists) may invite various people to creatively 'do something' with these memes in their life. In that way, as scholars we may well contribute to processes such as those described in this chapter.
- 18 To this day, indigenous Zoroastrians have not yet made attempts to claim legal copyrights for 'their' memetic materials. For a critical discussion of attempts to expand the notion of copyright in order to control 'cultural appropriation' see Brown 1998.

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PARSIS IN INDIA AND THE DIASPORA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEYOND

John R. Hinnells

It is widely thought that the climax of Parsi political social and economic power was in the late nineteenth century, with major leaders in Bombay, the rest of India and even with a Member of Parliament in London – Dadabhoy Naoroji in 1892. The Jijibhoys (see Palsetia in this volume), the Wadias, the Petits and the Tatas were industrial giants in India. Parsis were prominent in the field of social reform, notably female education (S.S. Bengali), and in law (see Sharafi in this volume on Davar). Perhaps the year in which they felt at their most powerful was 1905–6. Dadabhoy Naoroji still strode the international political stage; he was the only person who could hold together the moderate and the radical wings of the Indian National Congress (INC) and so was invited for a unique third time to preside at the annual Congress in Calcutta (Mambro 2005: 44–59; Masani 1939). Sir Pherozechand Mehta, who had been recently knighted, was dominating western Indian politics (Mody 1997). In 1906 Sir Muncherji Bhownagjee (see McLeod in this volume) was coming to the end of his second term as a Westminster MP. Sir Dinshaw Wacha was the organizational heart of the Bombay Presidency Association (Kulke 1974; Palsetia 2001: 277–319). The Tatas were making huge inter-communal charitable bequests.

Older Parsis in Mumbai often complain that the modern community lacks the giants of the nineteenth century and consequently that the Parsi community's standing and influence have declined, a position reflected in Luhrmann 1996: 126–57. Whereas books on Indian history in the nineteenth century usually make some reference to Parsis, books on the twentieth century rarely do. But that is only one side of the story. Many Parsis are understandably proud of their continuing history and the achievements of individuals are related in international magazines and other publications, notably the monumental works of Godrej and Punthakey-Mistree (2002), and Mody (2005).¹ This chapter first considers a range of Parsi achievers since 1906 to

counter the idea that the community has declined in terms of influence and standing. It will consider their role in politics, the professions, industry, sports, the arts and science in India in order to show the importance of this neglected modern community. It will then consider religious developments during this period and finally look at one of the key features of twentieth century Parsi history, the international diaspora which has resulted in their Zoroastrian religion being practised in more countries in the twenty-first century than at any other time in its long history. The aim of this bird's eye view of modern history and achievement is to place the Parsis in their rightful place in recent Indian history and diasporic studies, even though a short chapter has to be highly selective.

Parsis and politics

The period opened with one Parsi in Parliament at Westminster (Bhownagree), and one in a leadership role with the INC (Naoroji). Sir Dinshah Wacha finished as Secretary of the INC when the 'radicals' took over under Tilak in 1907 and instead he became the leader of the Western Indian Liberal Federation. Another prominent figure was Shapurji Saklatvala. He was a relative of the Tatas and was brought up in their home. He joined the Tata firm in 1901 and was sent to prospect for iron ore and coal in central India. He was eventually successful but the time spent in jungles and swamps caused severe health problems. He was sent to the London office in 1905 and took the waters in the Derbyshire spa town of Matlock, where he met his future wife, Sara (renamed by Saklatvala as Seri). When they settled in London he moved from his Liberal philosophy ever further to the political Left and in 1922 was elected as a Labour MP in the Socialist constituency of Battersea. Throughout most of the 1920s Shapurji Saklatvala was an MP at Westminster standing first for the Labour Party then for the Communists (the only Communist ever elected to Westminster). He was not influential with Government but was an international voice for the Communist Party. He was imprisoned in 1926, while an MP, for calling on the army not to shoot unarmed strikers during the General Strike. The British Government tried to block his visit to his native India but eventually permitted it. His tour in 1927 divided the Parsi community: some of the leaders refused to meet him or attend his lectures, but in his native Navsari he was greeted by the High Priest Dastur Meherji Rana and was given the freedom of the town. His main message was to urge Hindus and Muslims to unite in the face of imperial power. However, he criticized Gandhi for looking backwards in industrial terms, saying he should support the workers' efforts to increase their earnings. He also objected to the way Gandhi allowed people to revere him. Nevertheless he called for people to support Congress. Although he had married out of the community his children had their *naujote* in London and when he was in Navsari he wore traditional Parsi dress, but his Communist

philosophy had little influence on his fellow Parsis. After his India tour the British Government did not allow him to travel abroad again. He left Parliament in 1929 (Hinnells 1996: 194–218).

In India the Parsi community was divided over INC calls for Independence. Some feared the prospect of religious conflict if the British withdrew, especially as Hindu – Muslim battles erupted, such leaders joined Wacha in the Liberal Federation. But others strongly supported Gandhi (Dalal 2004: 16–44). During his time in South Africa one of his leading supporters was ‘Parsi Rustomji’ and his cause was supported by Frene Ginwalla, who was later to become Speaker of the South African Parliament after the end of Apartheid. Several Parsis were among Gandhi’s Indian entourage, including Naoroji’s two granddaughters, but two other names stand out, Khurshed Nariman and Firoze Gandhi. Nariman was a lawyer and began his political life in the Bombay Municipality being supported by Vithalbai Patel. In 1935 he was elected Mayor of Bombay and was famed for his care for the poor and for justice. He led the calls for complete Indian Independence rather than dominion status. He was elected President of the Bombay Provincial Congress and led the Salt Movement in the city and the Bombay contingent to the All India Congress Committee. When Congress secured a majority in six provinces in 1937 it was expected that he would be chosen to be leader of the Congress Legislative Party, but a less well-known lawyer was named. It is thought that one reason why Nariman’s future was blocked is that he wrote two books which, though praising Gandhi, also criticized him for bringing religion into the nationalist cause (Phadke 2005: 112–25).

Firoze Gandhi (Dalal 2004: 37–9) was imprisoned by the British for his political work in 1930 and 1932. In 1935 he went to London to study at the London School of Economics. In England he met Indira Nehru who was studying at Oxford, and they married in 1942 (he was imprisoned again that year along with other Congress leaders). At the first Indian General Election in 1952 he was elected to Parliament, where he waged campaigns against corruption and two of Prime Minister Nehru’s friends were forced to resign. One was an influential business man, the other involved the Finance Ministry. Relations with Nehru and Firoze Gandhi were not cordial and when Nehru, by then a widower, persuaded Indira to come and live at home to help with social functions husband and wife grew apart, but they never divorced. Firoze died from a heart attack at the age of 47 in 1960. Since India is a patrilineal society, technically in Indian law their sons, Sanjay and Rajiv, were Parsis, but although they were sympathetic to the community, especially Indira and Rajiv, they did not identify themselves as Parsis.

One active Congressman, who did identify himself as a (secular) Parsi, was Homi J.H. Talyarkhan. He rose from local Bombay politics to become General Secretary of the Congress Legislative Party and in 1957–60 was Parliamentary Secretary to the Chief Minister. In Bombay Talyarkhan was a

Cabinet Minister in Maharashtra for seven years before becoming Indian Ambassador in Libya 1971–7, and then was made Governor of Sikkim at a time of unrest there.²

Sir Homi Mody became a prominent figure in the industrial world. He represented the Bombay Mill Owners Association in the Central Assembly and Legislature and argued that political independence was essential for the economy of the country. He became a member of the Viceroy's cabinet which meant he had to leave his directorship of Tatas, but he left the Cabinet in 1942 in protest at the Government's treatment of Gandhi during his fast. He returned to Tatas and chaired the Central Bank. After Independence he was made Governor of Bombay (Mankekar 1968).

Not all Parsi politicians remained in Congress. Minoo Masani was General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party but in 1959 he helped set up the Swatantra Party and became its General Secretary. He held various senior posts – chair of the Minorities Commission, Mayor of Bombay, a Member of Parliament and leader of the Opposition (1949–52, 1957–70) (Masani 1977). Nani Palkivala was a lawyer who often challenged Government in major law cases, for example over the nationalization of banks. He left the Congress Party at the time of the Emergency (1975) and joined the Janata Party. He was a director of several Tata companies, and a member of the Law Commission, and in 1977 he was appointed Indian ambassador to the United States.³

Parsis have been important in Pakistan after its establishment. Jamshed Mehta came from a rich family but gave away his wealth to help the poor while leading an ascetic life. He devoted his life to Karachi, entering the Municipality in 1918, being elected its President for 19 consecutive years and then became mayor when the post was created. He resigned in 1937 because he considered corruption was rife in the Municipality. Although not a Parsi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah had close Parsi connections. His political mentor was Sir Pherozeshah Mehta; he assisted Dadabhoy Naoroji in his first campaign to become an MP at Westminster and was his secretary during the 1906 Calcutta INC. He married a Parsi, the daughter of Sir Dinshaw Petit, and his daughter in her turn married a Parsi. One of the medical team which cared for him in his last years was a Parsi, Dr Bharucha.

Although not politicians, various Parsis have played a prominent role in Pakistan. Jamshid Marker has served as Pakistan's ambassador under successive governments in France, the United States and at the United Nations where he acted as spokesman for the non-aligned nations and was the Secretary General's special envoy in East Timor when the war there was ended. The Edulji Dinshaws have been a widely respected family noted for their charitable giving. They founded the Nadir Dinshaw Engineering College in Karachi which went on to become a university. The Cowasjis are large ship-owners based in Karachi and the Avaris are the country's leading hoteliers – indeed the early cabinet meetings when the country was first created were

held in one of the Avari hotels! The current head of the family, Behram, has served as a Member of Parliament (Hinnells 2005: 189–244).

Parsis and the professions

Parsis have held high office in the armed forces since Independence.⁴ Dastur (2006) lists 39 Parsis who achieved high military rank (see also Sethna 2005). These include individuals who were head of the army, the air force and the navy. Perhaps the most famous is Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw. He fought at the front against the Japanese in the Second World War, he led the army in the war with Pakistan in 1971, and he was the first Indian to be given the title Field Marshal in 1973. Aspi Engineer was made Air Chief Marshal in 1960 and Jal Cursetji Naval Chief of Staff in 1976. Others became Admirals, Generals and Air Marshals (Dastur 2006: 278–97).

Parsis have been prominent in the field of law, so for example at the start of the twenty-first century Soli Sorabji was India's Attorney General and Tehmtan Andhyarunja was Solicitor General. Radhakrishnan (2005) lists 19 Parsi judges of Bombay High Court and Mody (2005: 358–411) has five chapters on Parsi lawyers. Parsis have held high legal office in Pakistan also. In 1976 Mr Justice Dorab F. Patel was appointed to the Supreme Court and the following year was one of the three judges appointed for the trial of former President Bhutto: he was the only one of the three judges to find in favor of Bhutto. When President Zia promulgated the Provisional Constitutional Order subordinating the judiciary to military courts and required judges to take an oath to uphold his constitution Patel refused and it is thought thereby lost the opportunity to become Chief Justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court. He was offered the post of ambassador in Paris but he refused because he said he could not represent a government with which he disagreed so fundamentally. In 1984 he became a member of the Asian Human Rights Commission and in 1987 was appointed to the International Commission of Jurists. Another Parsi, Justice Rustom Sidhwa, was a judge of the Supreme Court 1989–93 after which the General Assembly of the United Nations chose him as one of the eleven judges of the UN International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague for former Yugoslavian war criminals (Hinnells 2005: 226–7).

Parsi industrialists

Two of the industrial giants of India are Parsi firms – Tata Companies and Godrej. The founder of Tata industries, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, made his fortune in textiles but went on to pioneer India's steel industry at Jamshedpur (named after him) which began three years after his death in 1904. Indeed while this chapter was being written it was announced that Tata Steel had bought out the British steel industry. He also pioneered hydro-electric power

in India and invested considerable sums in charitable funding of technical and vocational education. He was a supporter of the INC and argued that to be independent India had to develop industrially. He was also remarkable in his care for his workers, introducing a pension fund and an accident compensation scheme in 1895 (Lala 1981). The Tata Empire was overseen from 1938 by the son of Jamsetji's cousin, J. R. D. Tata. He was born in Paris in 1904 but settled in India and was inducted into the Tata companies in 1925, becoming a Director on his father's death in 1926 and Chairman in 1938 until shortly before his death in 1993. He built the company substantially, for example by taking it into chemicals, automobile manufacture and implemented the early plans for scientific education and helping fund Homi Bhabha's work (see below, p. 261). In 1944 he gave much of his wealth to establish the J. R. D. Tata Trust which dispensed millions of Rupees in charitable work – mainly for science, but he also supported the National Center for Performing Arts, the Tata Memorial Hospital (specializing in cancer care) and the National Institute for Advanced Studies in Bangalore. Having been the first Indian to get a pilot's license (1929), he started his own airline, which eventually became Air India and was nationalized. He was a friend of Nehru but refrained from involving himself in the INC, believing that his role was to help India to flourish economically (Lala 1995; Dadabhoy 2005).

The firm of Godrej was started by Ardashir Godrej in 1897, making padlocks. They moved on to build highly secure safes and then soaps made from vegetable oil, replacing the animal fat of foreign soaps thereby allowing for Indian sensitivities regarding animals. Other lines of business include canning, steel cupboards, shelving for the home, industry and hospitals, typewriters, fridges, and even engines for India's space program. The factory at Lal Baug in Bombay became too small for their growing production lines so land was bought at Vikhroli and a large industrial garden township was built with housing for the workers, schools, social and medical facilities. Under Sohrab Godrej the company became deeply involved in environmental issues. They become more international with factories in various countries and with their export base in London. They are heavily involved in charitable work for people of all communities (Karanjia 1997).

Parsis and sports

Parsis have been successful in many sports (Mody 2005: 976–1055) but in India they are particularly associated with cricket, being the first Indian cricket touring team to England in 1886 and again in 1888 – a tradition which has been maintained. So for example in the first all-India cricket team to tour England in 1911 there were seven Parsis; in the first official test match between India and England at Lords in 1932 there were four Parsis; four Parsis played in the 1961–2 Indian touring team to play in Trinidad and

Jamaica. The two Parsis to play most test matches for India were Polly Umrigar (59) and Farokh Engineer (46) (Meherhomji 2005).

Parsis and the arts

Many Parsis have excelled in the various branches of the arts. Perhaps the two most famous in music are Zubin Mehta and Freddie Mercury (Faridun Bulsara). Mehta's father was leader of the Bombay Symphony Orchestra so Zubin was surrounded by music from his youth. At the age of 18 (1954) he gave up the study of medicine and went to study music in Vienna; four years later he won a conducting competition which gave him the assistant conductorship of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for a season. Thereafter, still only 26, he moved to Montreal and then on to Los Angeles as conductor. He became Director of the New York Philharmonic in 1978 and was made Musical Director of the Israel Philharmonic for life in 1981. When touring in cities with a Zoroastrian community he often invites them to a concert or visits the Zoroastrian center. He took the central role in a feature length docu-drama movie 'Wings of Fire' – the central plot of which is his search for his roots (Ookerjee 2005). Freddie Mercury was born of Parsi parents in Zanzibar but although distanced from the community during his career he put it in his will that he wanted a Zoroastrian funeral.

Parsis have also contributed much to Indian dance, music and painting (Mody 2005 Vol. III). A recent development in Parsi literature has been a number of novels in English. Prominent among Parsi novelists are Rohinton Mistry and Bapsi Sidhwa. Mistry with four novels, two of which were short-listed for the Booker Prize for English literature, has received numerous awards in his now home country of Canada. All four novels are about Parsi life in Bombay.⁵ Sidhwa, originally from Lahore but now living in Houston, Texas, has written three novels about successive generations of a Parsi family. The first is based in nineteenth-century Lahore, the second is about life in Karachi at the time of Partition and the third is about migration to America and the problems of intermarriage.⁶

Parsis and science

Homi Bhabha was perhaps India's greatest scientist. Having studied Engineering, Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge, in 1939 he returned to India for a visit, but the Second World War broke out and Bhabha decided to stay in India. In 1944 he persuaded J. R. D. Tata, to whom he was related, to invest heavily in basic sciences, and so was established the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. It started in Bangalore but needed more space and eventually Bhabha persuaded Nehru to give him land at the southern tip of Bombay, in the naval area of Colaba. Bhabha inspired many young Indians to pursue scientific research in his Institute

rather than go overseas. Bhabha saw that atomic energy would be important for the growing nation's economy and so he persuaded Nehru to pass the Atomic Energy Act in 1948: Bhabha was made Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and reported directly to the Prime Minister. He persuaded the Bombay Government to give 12,000 acres of land in Trombay, in north Bombay for the Institute which opened in 1954, and the first reactor went into operation in 1957. The fuel came from England but all the scientists were Indian. In 1955 the US President Eisenhower persuaded the United Nations to organize an international conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and Bhabha was made its President (a second was organized in 1958). The first reactors were opened in Maharashtra and Rajasthan with teams of young Indian scientists. As early as 1948 Bhabha persuaded Nehru to authorize an atomic weapons program as a preventative measure. As political tensions with China grew in the 1950s, Nehru authorized the production of plutonium in 1958 at Trombay, a process overseen by Bhabha. It was completed in 1964, and was inaugurated in 1965, four months after the Chinese first exploded their atom bomb. After the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 it was feared that Pakistan would also develop the bomb so that India felt threatened from two sides. The Indian bomb was exploded in 1974, long after Bhabha had died in a plane crash (in 1966). Bhabha led Indian research into space in 1961. He also pioneered the field of electronics which was developed at the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research. This was initially to develop instruments for atomic energy but it grew into the Department of Electronics with a much wider remit, again under Bhabha's direction. Bhabha was both a brilliant scientist and an able administrator, good at developing the talents of young scientists. He had a wide range of interests, especially art and music (Kanga 2005).

These are but a small number of leading twentieth-century Parsis: their lives illustrate that it is a mistake to assume that the influence of Parsis declined in twentieth-century India.

Religious change

The twentieth century was a time of change in Parsi religious beliefs and practices.⁷ In the nineteenth century there were two main influences on traditional Parsi belief, western thought (both Christian missionaries and academic studies), and Theosophy which, though of western origin, called on religions in India, explicitly including the Parsis, to reject academic studies because they failed to understand the mystical, or esoteric, insights of traditional religions. Parsis became interested and active in Theosophy when Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott moved their center from New York to Bombay in 1879. But when Annie Besant took over the leadership she moved the center to Madras in 1907 and identified the movement more with Hinduism and the nationalist cause, so the Parsi involvement declined.

Instead, a Parsi version of Theosophy, *Ilm-i Khshnoom* or path of knowledge, emerged, replacing Theosophy's Tibetan Masters with an Iranian race of giants. The founder was Behramshah Shroff who, it is believed, left home in 1873 at the age of 16 after a family dispute. While traveling north from Surat he met a secret group of giants from Iran who took him to their paradisaical land hidden beneath Mount Demavand and there instructed him in esoteric beliefs. He returned to India and eventually to Surat but he said nothing about his experiences until 1907; he moved to Bombay two years later to spread his teaching. He taught that the soul must seek liberation from its earthly bonds by a life of asceticism and vegetarianism. Each person's spiritual aura has to be protected from the impurity of evil so that it may obtain release from rebirth. Some Khshnoomists teach that Zoroastrianism is the religion for souls about to achieve liberation. There are significant differences of practice and of formal membership so it would be wrong to classify Khshnoom as a sect. There are also different interpretations of Khshnoom. Dr (Mrs) Meher Master-Moos claims to have discovered trunks of Shroff's manuscripts and states that her books written in English are translations of those manuscripts. She also claims that her astral body was transported through different levels of existence to be initiated for her work, and that she had a vision of Shroff. Much of her teaching concerns each person's aura and how it is affected by pure ritual vibrations or polluted by evil or impure vibrations. Not all Khshnoomists accept her claims: for example they are denied by two leading Khshnoomic writers Adi Doctor and K. N. Dastoor. All three are still actively writing.

Western influence continued to be exerted in the first half of the twentieth century. The leading example of this was Dastur M. N. Dhalla. Born in 1875 in Surat he grew up in poverty in Karachi. As a young man he was a fiery, orthodox writer and orator. A Bombay leader who met him persuaded him to take a degree in Avestan and Pahlavi languages in Bombay. There he met the distinguished Professor A. V. W. Jackson of Columbia University who persuaded him to go to New York and work for a PhD which he did before returning to India in 1909. He also attended courses in related subjects, for example the Comparative Study of Religions, so he was heavily influenced not only by Jackson's Protestant religion but also Spencer's theories of the evolution of religion. In Dhalla's own words: 'In 1905 I had set foot on American soil as an orthodox. Now in 1909 I was leaving the shores of the new World as a reformist' (Dhalla 1975: 158). He wrote a series of books which remain popular today, not least among North American Zoroastrians who are facing the sort of religious issues he faced a hundred years earlier. He interpreted Zoroastrian history in evolutionary terms, though he taught that Zoroaster was a prophet who stood outside the evolutionary framework of history, having received his teaching in visions from Ahura Mazda. In his devotional work he makes no mention of Ahriman as an alien evil being, though in his academic works he expounds various teachings derived from

the Pahlavi books. In his personal life he was deeply devout and when he was appointed Dastur in Karachi his co-religionists venerated him (see *Parsiana* October 21, 2006: 32–4). By contrast, orthodox Zoroastrians in Bombay reviled him. He was scathing about esoteric forms of Zoroastrianism and Theosophy.

In the second half of the twentieth century western influences have declined and there have been books written, for example by Dastur Bode, which reflect Hindu forms of thought. In one of his books Bode writes of ‘Our present state of consciousness is the result of ignorance (*avidya*), Bewildering limited consciousness (*maya*) and form-creating karmic activities (*samskara*)’ (Hinnells 2005: 102). To an outside academic it does not seem possible to explain how this is Zoroastrian, but religions naturally change as they move from one culture to another to be meaningful to different practitioners; for example, Christianity is different in Italy from India, China or Africa. It is, therefore, natural that in India Zoroastrianism should be seen through a Hindu prism.

A relatively small but important and different religious development in Bombay is the group known as ‘Zoroastrian Studies’, founded by Khojeste Mistree in 1977. Mistree had studied at Oxford but on the death of R. C. Zaehner he came under the supervision of Professor Mary Boyce. Mistree had a long-standing interest in mysticism; he found Boyce’s arguments on the continuity of Zoroastrian teaching and on the unity of doctrine and practice inspiring. On his return to Bombay he founded ‘Zoroastrian Studies’ in order to encourage Zoroastrians to learn more about their religion. His first lectures were held in a large Bombay cinema and had to be repeated because they were so popular. In 1978 he began traveling to communities in Australia, Britain and North America to lecture. The combination of his charismatic personality and the religious insights of his teaching attracted young (and old) well-educated Zoroastrians. He teaches in schools as well as giving public lectures. Doctrinally his position is orthodox, as reflected in his book (Mistree 1982). He calls, for example, for the preservation of the purity laws and argues against intermarriage. Unlike reformists he pays close attention to the Pahlavi literature and its theology. He is prominent in various orthodox campaigns, for example in the continued use of the *dokhmas*, even though a virus has wiped out the vultures. He was active in the formation of WAPIZ discussed below (p. 273).

The various interpretations of the religion discussed so far involve literary traditions. Philip Kreyenbroek, working with the late Mrs Shehnaz Munshi (a Parsi) and Sarah Stewart (see her chapter in this volume), collected oral traditions of belief and practice from some of the leaders mentioned, e.g. Mrs Moos and Khojeste Mistree, but also from the Zoroastrian public. These interviews bring out the widespread belief, not reflected in much of the literature, in the miraculous power of prayer, the devotion to particular heavenly beings, the emotional impact of visiting fire temples and how many

Parsis incorporate some Hindu beliefs and practices into their daily lives, not least devotion to Sai Baba. Particularly popular are 'Dastur'⁸ Kookadaru (1831–1900) and his follower Ervad Nadarsha N. Aibara (1933–89) whose special prayers are thought to cure illness, help at times of crisis and produce other miracles.

The question of intermarriage has become acute at the end of the twentieth century partly because of its increase but also because of some high-profile cases (Palsetia 2001: 320–37). In 1990 a young Parsi woman, Roxan Shah, who had married out of the community, was killed in a car crash and her parents wanted her to have a *dokhma* funeral, arguing that she had undergone a wedding under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) which did not require anyone to renounce or change their religion and that she had continued to practice Zoroastrianism. The BPP sought the guidance of the Dasturs, who argued that anyone who had married out had left their religion and could not be laid in the *dokhma*. One stated that since the SMA marriages were not Zoroastrian such marriages were not recognized as religiously valid, hence they should be regarded as false, even adulterous. The debates were intensified when J. R. D. Tata, who had been born of an intermarriage and was himself married-out, was allowed a Zoroastrian funeral in Paris in 1993. The following year Sir Neville Wadia, whose parents had converted to Christianity and who had married a Muslim (Jinnah's daughter), but who nevertheless felt himself to be a Parsi, was allowed to have his *navjote* performed on the grounds that he was not converting but rather returning to his religion. It was also felt that he and his family had given a great deal to the community (for example, 1,585 residential flats in five baugs or colonies). Some people felt there was inconsistency over the treatment of intermarrieds and there was a furious debate. In 1992 an Association of Intermarried Zoroastrians (AIMZ) was founded to represent the views of women who had married out and their offspring. Intermarriage is, therefore, probably an even more contentious issue at the end of the twentieth century than at the beginning. Overall, the twentieth century was a time of religious change and development.

The Parsi Zoroastrian diaspora

Indian Parsis are, of course, a diaspora, having migrated from Iran to India (see Williams and Nanji in this volume), and despite their successful settlement and commitment to India they retain a strong emotional link with their ancestral land. But at the end of the eighteenth century, and especially in the nineteenth century, Parsis again began to migrate first to China to trade in cotton and subsequently in opium; later in the nineteenth century they traveled to the province of Sind where they were suppliers to the British forces in Afghanistan and where they helped develop Karachi into a major port city. Also in the early nineteenth century they migrated first to Zanzibar, then

Mombasa and Nairobi, as the East African railway was built. This East African diaspora consisted more of administrators and professionals than traders. (For migration to Ceylon/Sri Lanka see Choksy in this volume.)⁹

Parsis in Britain

The first Parsi to travel to England was Naoroji Rustomji Maneck (Seth) who came in 1724 to protest to the East India Company at the injustices his family had suffered in Surat. He stayed for a year, won his case and returned to India a wealthy man. In India he and his brothers moved to the new center of Bombay, where an area was named after him (Naoroji hill) and he became leader of the Punchayet. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that many Parsis came west and settled. Among the first was Dadabhoy Naoroji who with two Cama brothers started the first Indian firm in Britain in 1855, with offices in London and Liverpool. Other early travelers were members of the Wadia family who came to study ship-building. The first Asian religious association in Britain, now known as the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, was founded in 1861 (Hinnells 1996). There was a sense of living at the heart of the Empire, which is why the first two Parsi Members of Parliament, Dadabhoy Naoroji (MP 1892–5) and Sir Muncherji Bhownagree (1895–1905 – see McLeod in this volume), came to England. The London leaders used their position of influence to plead the case of their persecuted co-religionists in Iran when the Shah or a member of the court came to Europe. The number of students coming in the early twentieth century was sufficient for them to found in 1906 a body called the Parsi Social Union. The older Association, now under the Presidency of Bhownagree, organized formal dinners to which they could invite British dignitaries, but these were more expensive than students could afford. There were people who were members of both groups, Dadabhoy Naoroji for example, but there was some tension between the two bodies, not least the disdain of Bhownagree who tried to stop them using the premises of their choice, rooms of the Northbrook Society in Piccadilly.

During the First World War the economy of the London Zoroastrians suffered, as did that of the rest of Britain; but after the war numbers increased sufficiently for them to look for a property of their own, which they obtained in 1920. The property turned out to be too large and expensive to maintain, so it was disposed of in 1925 and a smaller more convenient one purchased in 1929.

Later in the twentieth century there was a different pattern of migration, initially from South Asia, namely of people moving to the West not just for business but in order to settle. At first this was to Britain, because citizens of the Empire and of the Commonwealth in its early years had the right to settle in Britain. In the 1960s public pressure forced successive British governments to restrict immigration, but before the doors closed a number of

South Asians came and settled while they could. An unknown number of Parsis (probably between 2,000 and 4,000) arrived, mostly from Bombay, but also from Pakistan. As the process of Africanization grew in Kenya in the 1960s, most Parsis and those in Zanzibar after the 1964 revolution left, a few returning to India, some migrating to Canada but most coming to Britain. The growing numbers meant that there was a need for a larger property for the Association which was acquired in 1967. Most South Asians from East Africa, whether Sikh, Hindu or Parsi, tended to be more traditional than their co-religionists in India, having lived isolated almost in a nineteenth-century time warp. Once in Britain they gradually came to positions of power within the Zoroastrian Association and reversed some of the previous reforming policies. By the turn of the millennium the number of religious functions had increased substantially and a 2003 survey showed that the purity laws were being followed by a greater proportion of women than had previously been realized (see Mehta in this volume). The links with India remain strong through the internet, telephone and travel in both directions.

One of the significant developments in the 1990s was that the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) became involved in interfaith activity. Previously they had kept at a distance, fearing the young might convert to other religions. The higher profile this has given them has resulted in Zoroastrianism being one of the nine formally recognized religions of Britain, so that they are included in multicultural state activities.¹⁰ Hitherto little had been known about Zoroastrianism, so the community had been the butt of ignorant negative media attention, but now no longer. In 2002 they moved to new larger premises, an art deco former cinema which they have converted into premises capable of holding large events, with a prayer room based on the model of sanctuaries in Mumbai temples and good catering facilities. It is near to an underground railway station, has car parking facilities and is situated in the area of London where most Zoroastrians live. A major event occurred in 2002 when the Queen's youngest son, Prince Andrew, and his wife the Countess of Wessex visited the building. In 2005 it was the venue for the World Zoroastrian Congress. Because of good contacts with politicians, both local and national, they were able to obtain visas for the largest contingent of Iranian Zoroastrians ever to attend such a congress outside Iran. After the fall of the Shah many Zoroastrians left Iran; only a few came to Britain (most going, as we shall see, to the USA and Canada), but they have made the London community more conscious of the concerns of Iranian Zoroastrians. In 2006 a Parsi was made a member of the House of Lords, for the first time in history: Karan Bilimoria, who created Cobra beer, a lager designed specifically for consumption with Indian food, has been important in encouraging young entrepreneurs and for this he was ennobled. Also in that year, for the first time, the President of the Association was a Parsi who was actually born in Britain, which is evidence that the second generation of British Parsis is coming into a leadership role (Hinnells 1996; 2005: 314–424).

Parsi Zoroastrians in North America

Migration to the North American continent started later than it did to Britain. Canada opened its doors to Asian migration in 1967. Previously, various countries had been given very small quotas, but now a points system was established so that Canada could choose the immigrants it needed – for example, the educated professionals, the young and healthy. Two factors changed the Canadian Government's attitude: first, was the need for immigrants to replace the hundreds of thousands who annually emigrated south to the United States, and second, the recognition that for credibility in the United Nations Canada could no longer discriminate in favor of North Europeans. Shortly afterwards, the USA also opened its doors, again selecting the sort of immigrant beneficial to the economy, mainly professionals but also research students who would then remain – especially scientists. These selection processes mean that the general South Asian population in North America is middle class. Among those attracted were Parsis from India and Pakistan.

In the USA there was a concern among Zoroastrian leaders that, being spread thinly across such a large continent, the young would be vulnerable to the pressure of the 'melting pot' so that they would become 'all-American'. As a result, these educated and high-powered people took immediate steps to establish extensive support networks. Some pioneering Parsis had established the Zoroastrian Fraternity in Toronto in 1966, which made an agreement with the Immigration Department, in association with a travel agent, whereby a Bombay Parsi could apply for permission to enter Canada in the morning and be on a flight that evening. The first Association to be formed was in Quebec in 1967, followed by British Columbia (1968) and Toronto (1971); further associations were formed in New York (1973), California (1974) and Chicago (1975) until a network of 23 was established by the twenty-first century. Buildings began to be opened, in New York (1977), Toronto (1980), Chicago (1983), Vancouver (1986) and Los Angeles (1986). In 1987, after some false starts, a continent-wide Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) was started to pool resources, physical, financial and human. In particular they sought to establish religious education (for example, teaching materials and courses) and social events for the youth (for example, Caribbean cruises, skiing, whitewater rafting). The fear was that young Zoroastrians who met Americans every day but met fellow Zoroastrians only once a month would become distanced from their culture. Some of the youths from the 1980s, who are now adults, told me that although they had many school/college friendships, those which lasted were the ones which originated in Zoroastrian activities. FEZANA plans biannual congresses where strategies are evolved, but most importantly they are occasions when Zoroastrians from around the continent meet and socialize. FEZANA also produces a Journal which, as well as keeping all groups informed of events and achievements, is used for education, so that each issue has a theme on

one aspect of the religion, for example the priesthood, festivals, texts etc. A Mobed (priest) Council has been formed to discuss liturgical issues. The result is that American Zoroastrian self-perception is such that whereas the youth in India practice the religion more in the sense of going to temples, North American Zoroastrians probably know more about their history and doctrines. In 1997 a World Zoroastrian Business network was started in Las Vegas, with chapters in many countries including Britain and India.

The key issue in North America is intermarriage and the associated question of conversion: can the children, or spouse, of an intermarried Zoroastrian be admitted to the community? There was a bitter dispute in 1983 when Joseph Peterson, from a Christian background, was initiated in New York. Orthodox Zoroastrians in North America and India protested loudly, and the priest who defended the initiation most, Ervad Kersey Antia, was subjected to much vilification. The 1908 Parsi Panchayat law case (see Sharafi in this book) was invoked to argue that this North American act was illegal because of this ruling of the Imperial Bombay High Court. Since then there have been no such public acts but non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children are quietly welcomed at most functions. The other question which provokes debate is the balancing of change and continuity. On the one hand, many feel change is inevitable in the new country, especially where they have only prayer rooms and no fully consecrated temples but on the other hand the preservation of identity and ties to the old country requires a strong element of continuity. How the balance is achieved varies from association to association – and between individuals.

A problem faced in many diaspora communities is the relationship between Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians: this is especially so in Canada and the USA, because after the fall of the Shah in 1979, most Zoroastrian émigrés went to North America, especially to British Columbia and California (some also to New York and Toronto). Since Iranians form a larger proportion of the Zoroastrian population in North America than in Britain they have expressed their views more forcefully. When viewed at a distance Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians think of each other as co-religionists but tensions surface when they meet in the diaspora. An obvious problem is language – the second language in Iran has until recently been French not English, and hardly any Iranians know Gujarati. Conversely Parsis are fluent in English and know no Persian. Communication can therefore be difficult and misunderstandings arise. There were also problems with food – Iranians thought Parsi food too spicy, Parsis thought Iranian kebabs too bland. In New York they experimented with having Chinese food at a function, but that pleased nobody! However, the differences go deeper than that. Having grown up in a Muslim environment Iranians suspect that much of the religious practice they see is priestly ‘superstition’, and they tend to reject the medieval literature on which much Parsi belief and practice is based, focusing instead on what they see as ‘the pure’ teaching of the prophet found exclusively in the

Gathas. They do not share the quite widespread Parsi belief in the ‘mantric’ (or as the Iranians see it, the quasi-magical) power of prayer. Sometimes Iranian Zoroastrians observe the major Iranian festivals, especially No Ruz (New Year), with fellow Iranians (Muslims, Jews, etc) rather than with Parsis, and do not join many Parsi social activities. Coming together in the diaspora has produced unforeseen problems.¹¹

Perhaps the greatest focus of tension has been with the Zarathushtrian Center in California led by Dr Ali Jafarey (see Stausberg in this book), who, though not Iranian, has Iranian connections and the sympathies of many. He welcomes and initiates any one who, having studied the *Gathas*, wishes to be initiated. To many orthodox Parsis that is anathema.

Parsis in Australia

It was not until the mid-1970s that Australia dropped its ‘Whites only’ policies and adopted immigration policies similar to the Canadian model. The Zoroastrian Associations in Australia are therefore younger than in America and Canada. The biggest and oldest center is in Sydney. A loose Association was formed in 1970, but numbers were too small for it to flourish. Numbers doubled (from 110 to 224) in the years 1973–9. In 1977 talk began of finding ‘a place of our own’, but a center was not opened until 1986. It had proved difficult to raise funds from so small a community and the conditions imposed by an external benefactor (the Arbab Rustom Guiv Trusts in America) were unacceptable to many. When they opened the center, there were problems with neighbors, which resulted in a court case settled only in 1990 (in the Zoroastrians’ favor). There was also much debate about how to mark off a Zoroastrian ‘sacred space’ in the new building, for example concerning the hanging of modern paintings of the prophet, the size and location of memorial boards, making a memorial rose garden and whether they could have Christmas trees for children’s parties.

In small communities the impact of individual personalities can be considerable. In Sydney there is a more relaxed attitude to intermarriage and whereas in Melbourne there was a policy of not interacting with other (South) Asian communities (because ‘we are not Indian but Persian’) in Sydney there has been engagement with other communities. There is less interaction with India from Australia, in comparison with Britain. The Association in Melbourne was not started until 1978, and after early discussions they came to the conclusion that they were too small a community to obtain ‘a place of our own’. In the early days the Association was under the strong influence of two orthodox teachers, but later arrivals led to a more ‘reforming’ attitude which resulted in some fierce debates. Without ‘a place of our own’ it was more difficult to organize a range of social activities, especially for the young. What is characteristic of Sydney, and especially Melbourne, is the emphasis on being ‘Aussie’ which is consistent with Australian Government policy on

integration, rather than the British and Canadian policies of 'celebrating difference'. It is thought of as an easy place to settle because of language and climate. The Melbourne Constitution has more references to (good) relations with Australian society than any Zoroastrian Constitution I have seen anywhere in the diaspora.

In the twenty-first century it is estimated that there are approximately 2,400 Zoroastrians in Australia (with small groups in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane¹²). A growing center for Zoroastrian migration is New Zealand with approximately 860 (FEZANA *Journal* Winter 2004: 75–8). It is also estimated that there are 2,200 in the Persian Gulf, with 1,273 in United Arab Emirates, and 281 in Oman including 103 children (as of 2006), a clear indication of a long-term settlement not just a short-term trading base.¹³ Parsis from India and Pakistan and Zoroastrians from Iran have migrated to work as professionals in these thriving economies. The religion is practised in private in homes. There is no prospect of permanent settlement and a number have moved on to the New World, but those who remain in the Gulf States flourish.¹⁴

A world body

In 1962 a British-based Iranian Zoroastrian, Bailey Irani, called for the establishment of a world body. He was followed by others and at World Congresses in Bombay in 1976 and 1978 the call was taken up internationally with two main aims: first, for an international body to speak up for small endangered communities (at first concern was over East African Zoroastrians, later over the fate of Iranian Zoroastrians after the fall of the Shah); second, was to build an international network that would pool resources so that the well-established centers, for example India and Britain, could help the smaller or newer groups. The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) agreed and it was assumed they would take the lead, but when they did nothing a leading Iranian Zoroastrian, Dr Farhang Mehr (who had been Deputy Prime Minister under the Shah), flew to London and urged the leaders there to establish a world body in a country which was politically stable and where foreign exchange would not be a problem (unlike India at that time). The London leaders, notably Dr (Mrs) Kutar and Shahpur Captain, took up the challenge in 1979 and the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) was formed. It was decided that there should be individual membership so that big established organizations, such as the BPP, could not dominate. At first the BPP negotiated, but it later refused to be involved. WZO has always had an active Indian section but it has a global perspective and is concerned for Zoroastrians in the diaspora. Its leaders believe there is an inevitable increase in intermarriage so spouses and offspring of intermarrieds should be able to become members, otherwise families would be split. WZO was thus seen to challenge Bombay in several ways by basing a world body outside India, by

threatening the power of established bodies and because of its stance on intermarriage. Politically, therefore, it has been controversial. On the other hand, it has been widely respected for its charitable work. Its best-known work has been to help the thousands of poor Parsi farmers in rural Gujarat. There had been academic studies of these groups in the 1960s but they had been ignored.¹⁵ WZO commissioned a contemporary study which revealed stark rural poverty and raised substantial funds to buy equipment to enable the poverty-stricken families to become economically independent. They made videos of the forgotten farmers and took them to communities round the world. One man in particular, Dinshah Tamboly, who hailed from Gujarat but was by now a successful businessman in Bombay, took a particularly active role in overseeing on a monthly basis the use of the funds which were always given for projects, never as doles. He gained a reputation for handling the funds honestly and efficiently so that more funds flowed in. Although WZO is best known for this 'Poor Farmers Project', in fact it has spent even more on medical welfare, especially for people from India needing, but not being able to afford, specialized western medical treatment. It has also sponsored trainee priests, various educational measures, scholarly congresses and their publication. Its charitable work is not questioned, but its global political stance is. Moves to change the WZO dramatically began in America. The leading campaigner was Rohinton Rivetna of Chicago (who had previously founded FEZANA). He argued for a World Body of Federations parallel to the world body of individuals. Eventually the BPP and the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans in India agreed to this and it looked as though at the world congress in London in 2005 this would be agreed, but some orthodox forces rallied and blocked the move (see under WAPIZ below, in the following section). In consequence in 2006–7 a reformed world body is still on hold (Hinnells 2005: 605–35).

Demography

A common topic of discussion both in India and the diaspora is the question of numbers. Parsi numbers in India have declined dramatically in 60 years, from 114,490 in 1941 to 69,601 in 2001. In Pakistan they have declined from 3,721 to 2,121 in the same period.¹⁶ Migration is obviously one factor. FEZANA figures (Winter 2004: 24) suggest about 20–22,000 have migrated, but there is another factor. All studies of the Indian Parsi population show an increase in the average age of marriage, especially for women: so many Parsi women are well-educated and wish to pursue their careers; thus they delay marriage, which often results in smaller families. The number of women of marriageable age remaining single has increased, so that the birth rate has dropped and death rates regularly exceed birth rates. In the diaspora the age profile is different. It is mainly younger people who migrated and they are not yet reaching old age: consequently the death rate is lower and

families are having children, though rarely more than two. In global terms the balance of probability is, therefore, that this small 'community' is likely to decrease in size (Hinnells 2005: 44–54, 742–56). Many use this as an argument to allow the offspring of intermarried Zoroastrians to be initiated.

There is another scenario. Zoroastrianism started in Central Asia. Some Central Asian Republican states such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have groups claiming to be descendents of ancient Zoroastrian communities and they have expressed a wish to 'return' to their religion. The numbers are unknown, but they could be in the millions. Some Zoroastrians see this as a source of hope, but others, especially in India, see it as a threat, for if they are recognized as Zoroastrians their demands could swamp the charitable funds. Further, these 'Zoroastrians' know little about their religion, but if they join a world wide 'community', currently only approximately 120,000, leadership may well go to Central Asia.

Out of concern at the perceived threat from WZO accepting non-Zoroastrians as members and in fear of being swamped from Central Asia, a new body was formed in 2005, the 'World Association of Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians' (WAPIZ), supported by the high priests, in Mumbai to protect the rights and identities of those born Zoroastrians. The orthodox argument is that religion is not simply a set of beliefs but is concerned with the whole person, and that conversion is therefore psychologically damaging. Conversion is thought of as pointless since a good Zoroastrian or Christian (or people of any religion) will go to heaven and an evil person of any religion will go to hell. Conversion is associated with missionary work, which in turn and historically speaking has been associated with persecution. Some believe that we are born into the religion which God judges appropriate for us and to change religion is to go against the divine will. Parsis, even if declining numerically, they believe, should preserve their identity not because it is necessarily better, but because it is unique and they wish to preserve their distinctiveness without putting others down. WAPIZ was started to protect the interests of those born into a religion which, they believe, is threatened by those calling for reform.

Conclusion

Zoroastrianism, arguably the world's oldest prophetic religion,¹⁷ is in the twenty-first century practised in more countries around the globe than at any time in its long history. It can be seen to be under threat from declining numbers in India, from politically volatile situations in Pakistan and Iran and from assimilation in the diaspora. But it also remains a dynamic religion which is producing major achievers around the world. The emotional ties of diasporic Zoroastrians with the old countries, namely India and Iran, remain strong. However Westernized the Parsi diaspora may be, visits to India by the diaspora youth are commonly inspirational; similarly, more pilgrimages are

being made from India and the diaspora to Iran. Zoroastrians have always been loyal to the country in which they live, so for example in the Indo-Pakistan war there were Parsi Generals on both sides. Consequently they identify themselves as Indians, Iranians and British, American, Canadian or Australian and see no conflict between that and being Zoroastrian. Some Parsi youth, in America especially, want to leave behind their ethnicity (e.g. Parsi) and emphasize rather their religious Zoroastrian identity which, they believe, binds together those of different national origins. In a secular world Zoroastrian pride in their religion is noteworthy. Many young Zoroastrians have said to me that belonging to such a small religion makes them feel special.

There is widespread awareness of the huge contribution Zoroastrianism has made to the world from the time of Cyrus the Great, who created the Persian Empire and liberated the Jews from exile in Babylon; it influenced Biblical thought and Iranian Islam. Zoroastrians can rightly claim they have contributed to any society in which they have lived. Despite the internal divisions between orthodox and reform (though these have never become formal 'sectarian' divisions) there is nevertheless a sense of 'the Zoroastrian world' united both by heritage and by contemporary interaction. This is not only realized through travel to and from the old countries but also between diasporas, for example Americans visiting Europe or India commonly stop off in London and meet fellow Zoroastrians. British Zoroastrians often go to American congresses; the telephone network and not least the internet mean there is generally good awareness of what is happening elsewhere. There are international magazines. In addition to *FEZANA Journal* there is *Hamazor*, the journal of WZO and especially the Mumbai produced *Parsiana* which is sold worldwide and regularly includes items on Zoroastrians outside India. The transnational networks are extensive. Declining numbers have not prevented the last hundred years from being a time of achievement, dynamism and change for Parsi Zoroastrians.

Notes

- 1 See also the works of Dalal 2004 and Dastur 2006 which chronicle the achievements of Parsis up to the twenty-first century in fields as diverse as the arts, armed forces and politics.
- 2 On these and other Parsi political figures see Dalal 2004: 16–44; Mody 2005: 44–165.
- 3 On these and other Parsi politicians see Hinnells 2005: 54–61.
- 4 The British were reluctant to recruit and promote Indians into the armed forces, except during World Wars.
- 5 *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987); *Such a Long Journey* (1991); *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002).
- 6 *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *Ice Candy Man* published in America under the title *Cracking India* (1988) and *An American Brat* (1993). For a study of Parsi fiction in English see Kapadia *et al.* 2001.

- 7 See Stausberg 2002: 89–51; Hinnells 2000a: 241–71 and 2005: 99–135.
- 8 A title he is popularly given though technically he was not a Dastur.
- 9 On the diaspora see Stausberg 2002, II: 263–378; Hinnells 2005.
- 10 For example the Millennium Celebrations, the annual Commonwealth service at Westminster Abbey and participation in events involving members of the royal family and senior politicians.
- 11 For a comparative study of Parsi Zoroastrians in Britain, Canada and the USA see Hinnells 2000b.
- 12 See *Parsiana* November 1997, January and September 1999. For the Zoroastrian Association of Western Australia see www.zawa.asn.au. Sydney and Melbourne also have good websites (www.aza.org.au and www.zav.org.au respectively).
- 13 FEZANA *Journal* Winter 2004: 70f. I am grateful to Cashmera Bhaya for the accurate figures for UAE and Oman.
- 14 On other diasporic settlements see Stausberg 2002, II: 263–378.
- 15 For a review of the literature see Hinnells 2005: 44–7, 617–20.
- 16 For a review of the sources see Hinnells 2005: 47–54, 216–20.
- 17 Zoroaster is commonly dated circa 1,500 BCE.

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